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PREPARING YOUT H F OR CHANGE

The young generation in South Africa has been divided along racial lines. Youth, across the colourline have been deprived of their rights to integrate and share ideas with one another. Today we have a generation destroyed by apartheid and facing a bleak future.

(a). Their role in the black communities has been largely categorised as destructive. Various socio economic problems contribute to this:

" Homelessness and poverty

h The breakdown of families- single parenthood.

" High teenage pregnancy rates, child abuse etc;

' High unemployment

t Poor education;

" High crime rates;

h Violence

t Detentions and imprisonment.

This can be coupled with what we can broadly call the causes of social disintegration.

A number of historical factors contribute to this:

1. The conquest of South Africa by force has left deep scars and the oppression of the majority by the minority has undermined self respect.

2. The migrant labour system with its labour compounds and hostels which have led to the destructions of family life.

3. The anti-urbanisation policy which denied black access to the cities. This led to overcrowding in the townships and a lack of basic amenities.

4. The establishment of bantustans which served as reserves of unskilled labour.

We also note contemporary factors:

1. The systematic destruction of communities through the apartheid system.

2. The systematic underdevelopment of blacks through an unequal distribution of resources.

3. A deliberate denial of education through the Bantu education system.

4. Increasing political conflict, which places strain on social relationships and entrenches violence as the way of settling disputes.

We should also mention the lack of recreational and other facilities for young people in black areas.

B. The quality of life of white youth in our country has also been affected by apartheid. As young people, they have also experienced systematic destruction of their social life. They have experienced traumatic experiences of family life because of apartheid.

While apartheid has been created to entrench white rule and privileges, white youth as a sector has been "alienated" and "marginalised".

White youth today experienced specific problems, some of which are similar to those experienced by black youth.

1. Their education system designed to benefit apartheid has turned white youth into racists and made them believe they are superior to their fellow human beings.

2. Militarisation of South African Society, coupled with compulsory military service for white males and violence against their fellow South Africans has dehumanised white youth.

3. These factors have resulted in various psychological problems amongst white youth.

4. Drug Abuse

5. Child Abuse

6. The breakdown of family life, including divorce etc.

South Africa's youth is one of the sectors of society who have most vigorously work for the creation of a democratic country. They have been the main targets of state repression in the 80's: 40% Of all detainees under the State of Emergency were children and youth (11 00) and an estimated 312 youngsters were shot by the police during the same period. The creation of a democratic country, objectively, will be to the benefit of all South African's youth-black and white.

The AN C Youth League believe that the youth can and has been a powerful force for change in the period of transition and in the future. We believe that the majority of the youth support a peaceful transition, although they are impatient about the pace of this process. They too want an end to the violence, and lasting peace. They will have to support and defend the democratic values and human rights that will form the basis of a new South Africa

The youth in one of the sectors of society who has been most adversely affected by apartheid: jobless, unskilled, non-literate (Appendix A); their hopes for the future are very dim, unless special efforts are taken to address their concerns. We believe that the main vehicle to ensure that the energy and enthusiasm of youth is constructively channeled, and that aspirations are addressed in a democratic country, is to build the capacity of youth organisation.

Given the situation outlined above, it is clear that a youth (organised component) has a crucial role to play in empowering young people so that they should be able to overcome the legacy of apartheid. This organised component has the task of instilling confidence and develop skills amongst the youth.

In order to do this, resources are needed. Assistance is required to train, educate and provide for the youth of our country, so that they can take charge of their own lives and become self-reliant.

The development of projects will create the basis upon which young people become involved in decision making. Our youth look to the ANC to provide the means to overcome their daily frustrations. Embarking on these endeavors will strengthen the youth and create the foundations on which their present and future roles will be determined. _

The very building of a youth organisation can be construed as a survival strategy, but it moves beyond that. It is about creating a new person, young people, black and white, that can play a much more positive role in our society, both now and in the future. Therefore, instead of a mere survival strategy, we believe it is a developmental strategy.

Since its unbanning, the ANCYL has emerged as the champion of young people in our country. It is the youth league that ensures that young people do not become a "lost generation". We do this by actively involving young people in our country in fighting for the interest and rights of the youth of our country.

But fighting and talking is not enough, therefore the ANC youth League is involved in empowering young people by running educational projects, skills training, organisational skills etc. Special services are also provided to the rural youth of our country.

We run specific programmes (which included counseling) with young people in local communities around following:

' Crime and drug abuse

t Violence

" Teenage pregnancy

t Skills development and co-operatives for unemployed youth

"' Formal education and tuition for student youth.

t Youth festivals, swimming gala's soccer matches, athletic meetings etc. To cater for the sporting and cultural needs of the youth.

t Bringing white and black youth together to share experiences and ideas and to build non-racialism in practice.

The above mentioned projects had limited success for the following reasons:

3. Lack of youth centers

b. Lack of financial funding

c. Violence in black communities

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The ANC Youth League has a reputation for care and concern amongst the young people of our country. It has a unique organisational structure that reaches out to wherever youth are in townships, villages, schools, suburbs, streets etc.

The opportunity to service young people in need both black and white, and to actively involve them in projects is therefore great and growing.

At present the main problem in taking advantage of this opportunity is the few people with skills and the commitment to train others to serve and utilise resources effectively.

We have already done research work, but a lack of resources, both material and financial, seriously hampers our projects.

These problems, and several others, are raised at every forum which provides youth with the opportunity to express themselves.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES OF YOUTH PROGRAMME

Every societal development which does not enjoy the support of the youth is bound to fail. Furthermore, a country, a movement or an organisation that does not take care of its youth and invest in them does not deserve its future.

Our country, South Africa, is presently passing through one of its most difficult periods in the history of its people. We stand at the threshold of an exciting but yet difficult period of transition from an apartheid society to a non-racial non-sexist and democratic order and existence.

Two challenges stand in the face of every South African today, as well as all democratic people the world over. The first is how can we, South Africans, best handle this great task of transition to democracy; the second most fundamental is how are we going to deepen, indigenise and sustain the democratic order we seek to establish in our country.

Undoubtedly, the only answer to these two fundamental questions can be provided by answering a corollary to both questions. That corollary is, how strong are the forces for change and democracy in South Africa and what can be done to sustain, strengthen and transform them into a tidal wave that should overwhelm all backward opposition and wayward deviations. Put simply, the question is how strongly organised is the democratic movement and what can be done to strengthen and expand its organisation.

Indeed, this is what the request for financial and material assistance for the ANC Youth League is all about.

Here follows an outline of the objectives for a youth development programme:

- to train youth workers to understand the processes taking place in the country, the implication for youth, and the future;

- to build capacity of local youth organisation to initiate and sustain projects aimed at youth in communities, particularly those most affected by apartheid;

- to ensure that youth have the necessary administrative and managerial skills to run effective local youth organisations and projects;

- to build an awareness amongst youth of democratic values such as respect for human rights, tolerance, environmental awareness, etc.

Appendix A

Socio-Economic Situation of South African

Youth, some Statistics

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5 18 million South Africans are under 19 years (out of a total population of 4- 35 million).

5 20% of the population are in the age group 16-24 years

5 35% are in the age group 16-34 years

Education

5 Per capita expenditure black and white child 1:4 (1989/1990)

5 between 3.5-5 million children/youth of school going age (7-16) are not in school (SAIRR research, July 1991)

5 In 1990 the total number of school drop outs were estimated at 814562 (10%) of the total of 7 298 107 pupils enrolled from Sub A to Std 10.

5 Every year, close to 300 000 youth are added to the conservatively estimated 5-6 million non-literate South Africans

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5 55% of the unemployed are under 29 years

5 only 20% of new job seekers are able to find employment, the majority of whom are youth,

Prisons

5 of the 96 540 persons in prison daily, the majority are under 30

5 there are an estimated 9 000 juveniles in prison (1992)

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5 one out of every three pregnancy in South Africa is a teenage pregnancy

(12-17 years)

Social Services

5 there are very little social services for black youth, who are also affected

by the general lack of services like hospitals, clinics, social workers, counseling services, unemployed benefits, etc.

there is a general lack of sport and recreation facilities in most black townships and schools.