

The kids do it themselves

By  Charles Siboto

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We've been through a lot lately, right? Madness seems to reign: numerous terrorist attacks, Trump withdrawing the US from the Paris climate accord and the Brexit sequel that is the recent UK snap election. At home things aren't any better with Zuma, Gupta's email leaks, Zille getting herself into stupid situations, our public protector taking on the SA Reserve Bank out of the blue and stories of women who have been kidnapped, raped and murdered in the news every day. We are running out of hashtags for all the madness. As a world and as a country we still have a long way to go in terms of prejudices, access to education for more people and electing governments that work for everyone. Last year I wrote an article about how the colourful use of language was one of the instruments that young people use to make their voices heard, *#YouthMonth: Like kids these days say*.



#YouthMonth: Like kids these days say

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The adults are breaking the world and this #YouthMonth I think it's appropriate to share some good news of young people getting their #hustle on, improving their lives and that of their communities. This, then, is my eulogy of sorts to the young people of South Africa who have been through a lot and will be going through more to make their dreams come true. I write these words for you. I write them to thank you for your strength and determination. During a turbulent time, I write these words to remind you of how amazing each and every one of you are.



Image sourced from kwezicomics.co.za

Making careers out of passions

Many of us are the children of miners, domestic workers, street sweepers, cashiers, construction workers, cleaners, waiters and waitresses. So many of us have had to be exceptional just to be considered normal but we always rise to the challenge. Whether we come from a township, suburb, rural village or were raised by one heroic parent or had the love of both we get up each morning and chase our dreams. I know of people who are the first in their village to go to university and then go back and help others fill in application forms for university and NSFAS forms to access funds to study. So

many times, all that is needed is pointing someone in the right direction to change their lives. So many of us are embarking on or creating careers that our parents don't understand because they didn't exist in their time. At social gatherings, they aren't even sure if they should be bragging or not when they tell their friends about us. That's because the world is changing and we are making careers out of our passions.

Walk Fresh

I know friends who wanted to write and draw comic books and they worked hard until they could do just that. This has resulted in growth in the South African comic books industry with cool ventures like [Sector Comics](#) coming into existence and [Kwezi](#) becoming one of our own homegrown superheroes. I've seen a dude from my university, Lethabo Mokoena, start his own funky sneaker cleaning and shoe-care service called [Walk Fresh](#) after he graduated and could not get a job. The dude loves dressing fresh, wearing a polished pair of shoes or a squeaky-clean pair of sneakers so he educated himself on how to bring the best out of people's old and dirty footwear and at the same time created work opportunities for people in his community.

Hanging out on YouTube, like one does, I came across a pioneer, [Ludwig Marishane](#) who grew up in rural Limpopo and at age 17 invented a solution that allows you to clean yourself without water because access to water in his village is sporadic. He called the product DryBath and went on to start his own company called [Headboy Industries Inc.](#) I also remember reading about the novel, *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa that she got published when she was 21. She has since written two more novels, *Spilt Milk* and *Period Pain*. She has also gone on to become a public health physician, scholar and all-round super woman. This morning I read a story about a young woman struggling to get her law degree and how it took her much longer than the four years it should have. But after she failed because of family circumstances, not applying herself, falling pregnant and dropping out for some time to get a job so she can feed her baby she came back and eventually got it done.



[21 Icons Season 3] Kopano Matlwa Mabaso

28 Jan 2016



Problem solvers

These are merely snapshots of the great things young people are doing to solve problems and make their dreams a reality. South Africa is a country of high youth unemployment and this mixed with many young people not growing up in stable families results in a high crime rate. But there are also so many remarkable young people doing the best that they can to rise above their circumstances. I see this in my daily interactions with people like a colleague and good friend who was telling me about her boyfriend who's made his second movie and when I log onto Facebook and see posts by people I know getting recognition for being exceptional in some field like sport, music, literature or film. I meet people who are pushing boundaries in the sciences and it's important that we celebrate these young people because they will all form part of the solution for the larger problems we face in our country and the world. This #YouthMonth I want all young people to know that the grand hustle continues with us at the head of it and that we will do some great things together.

ABOUT CHARLES SIBOTO

Charles Siboto is a delightful, youngish person. He firmly believes that kindness matters and cannot abide people who are asshats.

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