

MARXIST WORKERS PARTY • STUDENTS & YOUTH PLATFORM

A PLATFORM AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH

Towards a United Marxist Youth and Student Movement

EDUCATION • JOBS • DIGNITY • SOCIALISM

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Workers Party

INTRODUCTION

A generation denied a future

This Platform is a call to the students and youth of South Africa to unite in struggle for free, quality education; permanent and secure jobs; decent public services; equality; dignity; and a socialist future. It begins from the daily experience of young people in schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and working-class communities, but it does not stop there. It connects each immediate grievance to the capitalist system that produces unemployment, poverty and inequality on a mass scale.

Young people are repeatedly told to become more employable, polish their CVs, start businesses and compete harder for opportunities that do not exist. This turns a social crisis into an individual failure. South Africa does not have millions of unemployed young people because an entire generation lacks ambition. It has mass unemployment because production is organised for private profit, investment is withheld when profits are judged inadequate, industry has been allowed to decline, and public services are starved of the workers and resources they need.

The education crisis and the jobs crisis are two sides of the same capitalist failure. Working-class learners are pushed through under-resourced schools; thousands are excluded from universities and colleges; graduates join unemployment queues; and those who find work are frequently trapped in internships, labour-broking, temporary contracts, platform work and poverty wages. Education cannot guarantee a future when the economy itself destroys secure work.

In 2026, the fiftieth anniversary of the Soweto Uprising challenges a new generation to recover the courage, organisation and class outlook of 1976. Commemoration must become mobilisation. The task is to unite school students, tertiary students, unemployed youth and young workers around common demands and a common programme of action, linked to the organised working class and the struggles of women and communities.

The MWP circulates this draft for discussion, amendment and adoption in mass meetings, student structures, youth organisations, trade unions and communities. It is intended both as a platform and as a practical organising instrument, including the basis for a national Jobs for Youth campaign.

PART ONE THE CLASS OF 1976 AND THE UNFINISHED STRUGGLE

From the Durban strikes to the Soweto Uprising

The 1976 uprising did not fall from the sky. Three years earlier, the Durban strikes of 1973 had shattered the all-powerful. Black workers took collective action against poverty wages, exploitation and the denial of trade-union rights. Their movement altered the balance of forces and demonstrated the power of workers at the point of production.

When the apartheid state imposed Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools, learners rebelled against far more than a language policy. Bantu Education prepared black youth for subordination in the workplace and society. The uprising therefore struck at both national oppression and class exploitation. It spread rapidly beyond Soweto and placed a new generation in the front ranks of the struggle.

The revolts of workers and youth converged with community struggles and the mass political movement of the 1980s. This convergence created the conditions for school boycotts, stayaways and general strikes capable of

paralysing the apartheid economy. Youth brought energy and audacity; organised workers brought social power, discipline and a growing socialist consciousness. Their unity helped make apartheid rule ungovernable.

Political freedom without economic liberation

The right to vote and the defeat of formal apartheid were historic gains. But the negotiated settlement preserved the ownership and control of the economy in the hands of a capitalist minority. Political office changed hands while the mines, banks, factories, farms and major retailers remained organised for private accumulation. The social aims for which millions fought - jobs, homes, education, healthcare and equality - were subordinated to the demands of profit.

The ANC government austerity, privatisation, outsourcing and commercialisation. The result is visible in every unemployment queue, overcrowded classroom, unaffordable residence and collapsing municipal service.acial inequality embedded capitalism continues to reproduce the poverty and dispossession inherited from colonialism and apartheid, while a small black elite has joined the wealthy at the summit of society.

The lesson is not that the struggle failed. It is that it was interrupted before economic power passed into the hands of the working class. National liberation cannot be completed while capitalism remains intact. The struggle for equality, dignity and democratic control of society must therefore be carried forward as a struggle for socialism.

Unity needs a socialist programme

Unity is indispensable, but unity without a programme can be broken by every setback, election and leadership manoeuvre. The movements of students, unemployed youth, young workers, women and communities must unite around concrete demands and democratic organisation. They must also recognise the working class as the force capable of stopping production and reorganising society on a new basis.

A new youth and student movement must remain independent of the capitalist parties and the state. It should cooperate in action with every organisation prepared to fight, while preserving its programme, its democratic structures and the right of its members to debate openly. Its objective must be the construction of a mass workers party on a socialist programme.

PART TWO YOUTH UNDER CAPITALISM

Mass unemployment is a system not a temporary emergency

The youth unemployment figures expose the scale of the catastrophe. In the second quarter of 2026, South Africa's official unemployment rate reached 33.6 percent. For young people aged 15 to 24 it stood at 62.8 percent. These figures exclude many who have given up actively searching for work. Behind every percentage are millions of lives suspended between education, unpaid care, hustling, temporary schemes and unemployment.

This is not a passing downturn. The economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the second quarter of 2026 after years of growth

Manufacturing and mining have shed jobs while financialisation, imports and the concentration of ownership have narrowed the productive base. Capital can make profits without employing the numbers of workers that society needs. The market therefore treats an entire generation as surplus.

Unemployment reaches into every part of life

Without an income, young people struggle to leave home, form independent households or support children. Transport and data costs turn job-seeking into a financial burden. Hunger undermines study and mental health. Depression, anxiety and hopelessness grow in conditions where society blames individuals for a collective disaster. Gender-based violence, substance abuse, gangsterism and xenophobic scapegoating find fertile ground in communities stripped of work, services and hope.

Young women carry a double burden. They experience higher unemployment while performing unpaid care work and facing harassment in education, job-seeking and employment. LGBTQI+ youth, young people with disabilities, migrants and rural youth encounter additional discrimination.

These oppressions must be fought directly, while recognising that their mass material basis is reinforced by class exploitation and poverty.

The lie of employability

Government and business repeatedly present skills as the solution to unemployment. Yet qualified teachers, nurses, artisans and graduates remain unemployed while schools, clinics, municipalities and infrastructure projects suffer severe staff shortages. The contradiction is plain: society needs their labour, but austerity and the profit system prevent it from being used.

Training has value when it develops human capacity and is connected to secure work. Detached from job creation, endless short courses, learnerships and certificates become holding pens. They recycle young people through temporary programmes while employers gain subsidised labour. The problem is not simply a mismatch between skills and vacancies. The decisive problem is the shortage of decent jobs.

Precarious work is not a bridge to security

EPWP placements, internships, labour-broking, platform work and short-term contracts are presented as stepping stones. For many young people they become a revolving door: a stipend today, unemployment tomorrow, and no recognised right to permanence. Public employment programmes are useful only if they expand socially necessary services, provide accredited learning during paid working time and create a clear path into permanent employment.

Young workers must not be used to undercut wages and conditions won by previous generations. Equal pay for work of equal value, full trade-union rights and the same protections against dismissal must apply from the first day of employment. Internships and probation cannot become zones without rights.

Against xenophobia and the struggle for crumbs

Capitalism encourages unemployed people to see migrants as competitors for scarce jobs, housing and services. This directs anger away from the corporations and governments responsible for scarcity. Migrant workers are frequently super-exploited precisely so that employers can weaken the wages and organisation of all workers. The answer is common organisation, equal rights and equal pay, irrespective of nationality.

A youth movement worthy of 1976 must reject xenophobia, racism, sexism, homophobia and every attempt to divide the working class. An injury to one is an injury to all.

PART THREE THE EDUCATION CRISIS

Class apartheid in education

The legal architecture of apartheid education has been abolished, but a class-divided system reproduces many of its outcomes. Wealth buys small classes, safe buildings, technology, sport, libraries and routes into elite institutions. Working-class learners encounter overcrowding, hunger, unsafe sanitation, long journeys, teacher shortages and a curriculum narrowed by examinations and scarce resources.

The crisis is not caused by public education as such. It is caused by underfunding, unequal social conditions, outsourcing and the attempt to subject education to market discipline. The growth of private schools, colleges and universities is parasitic on the deterioration of the public system. Education must be treated as a universal social right a public good from early childhood through adulthood.

Early childhood development

The first years of life shape health, learning and development, yet access to quality early childhood development remains determined by household income and geography. Poorly funded centres depend on low-paid, overwhelmingly women workers and fees from families who can least afford them. **ECD is simultaneously an education question, a women's liberation question and a jobs question.**

- Free, universal, high-quality public ECD for every child, with nutritious meals, safe buildings and inclusive support.
- Absorb eligible ECD practitioners into the public system as permanently employed education workers with training, recognised qualifications and a living wage.
- Build and upgrade centres in townships, informal settlements and rural areas under democratic community and worker oversight.
- Provide free childcare linked to schools, colleges, workplaces and communities so that caring responsibilities do not exclude young women from education or work.

Schools

South Africa's literacy and numeracy crisis is a social indictment, not proof that working-class children cannot learn. Inadequate foundational support, poverty, hunger, language barriers, overcrowding and unequal resources accumulate across a learner's school career. Inflated pass rates cannot conceal dropout and the uneven quality of learning.

- Build enough schools and employ enough teachers to reduce class sizes to no more than 30 learners, moving towards 20.
- Fill every funded vacancy; train and permanently employ teachers, counsellors, librarians, nurses, administrators, cleaners, security and maintenance workers.
- Eradicate pit toilets and provide safe water, sanitation, electricity, laboratories, libraries, sport and universal internet access.
- Expand the school nutrition programme to provide a nutritious breakfast and lunch every school day, including during examinations and school holidays where needed.
- Free, safe and reliable scholar transport, including for learners in rural areas and learners with disabilities.

- Mother-tongue education in the foundation phase with properly resourced multilingual transition, while guaranteeing access to all official languages.
- A democratic, anti-racist, anti-sexist and scientific curriculum that teaches the history of workers', women's, youth and liberation struggles and develops critical thought.
- End corporal punishment, sexual harassment, homophobic and transphobic bullying, gangsterism and violence through adequately staffed support services and democratic school safety committees.
- Full democratic rights for learner representative councils, including the right to organise, meet, publish and take collective action.

TVET and community colleges

TVET colleges are treated as a second choice while employers complain about artisan shortages. Community colleges remain too weak to meet the needs of adults and young people excluded from both education and work. A democratic post-school system must end the hierarchy between intellectual and practical knowledge and link education to socially useful production without subordinating learning to employers.

- Massively expand and fully fund public TVET and community colleges, with campuses and learning centres in every district.
- Modern workshops, laboratories, libraries, residences, internet access and student support equal in quality to universities.
- Free tuition and adequate grants for accommodation, food, transport, books, equipment and data.
- Paid apprenticeships and workplace placements under union supervision, with training standards, full safety protection and pathways to permanent jobs.
- Democratic governance by elected students, staff, workers and communities; end corruption, tender profiteering and outsourcing.
- Community colleges as accessible centres for second-chance education, literacy, political education, arts, technology and locally determined learning.

Universities

The annual registration crisis expresses the contradiction between rising aspirations and restricted public provision. Financial and academic exclusion, NSFAS failures, unaffordable accommodation and declining subsidies continue to ignite protests. Corporate management treats students as customers and staff as production units, while outsourced and casual workers carry the institutions on poverty wages.

- Free, universal, quality public higher education funded through progressive taxation and public ownership of the economy's commanding heights.
- Cancel historic student debt and end all financial and academic exclusions arising from poverty.
- Replace the unstable funding model with direct public funding and a universal grant covering tuition and the full cost of study.
- A massive public programme to build safe, affordable student residences and expand universities, especially historically disadvantaged institutions.
- Insourcing and permanent employment of all campus workers; end casualisation of academic and support staff.
- Democratically elected governing structures with decisive representation of students, academic staff and workers; open the books of every institution.

- Free, accessible mental-health, disability, reproductive-health and survivor-support services.
- End sexual harassment and gender-based violence through survivor-centred procedures, properly funded services and democratic oversight.
- Defend academic freedom and decolonise knowledge through democratic curriculum transformation rooted in scientific inquiry, African experience and the struggles of oppressed people.

PART FOUR A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH

Jobs and income

- A permanent, socially useful job for everyone able to work. Launch a publicly funded programme to create millions of jobs in housing, education, healthcare, ECD, public transport, renewable energy, environmental repair, water, sanitation, arts, sport and community services.
- Convert EPWP, community work, education assistant and other recurring public-service posts into permanent jobs with full benefits, accredited training and progression.
- A living minimum wage of R15000,00 a month, adjusted for inflation, with equal pay for work of equal value.
- A 32-hour working week without loss of pay, moving towards a 20-hour week as productivity and democratic planning allow. Share the work instead of sharing unemployment.
- Ban labour-broking and bogus independent contracting. Full employment rights from day one, including for platform and gig workers.
- All internships, apprenticeships and learnerships must be paid at no less than the minimum wage, regulated by collective agreements and linked to permanent posts.
- A universal basic income grant for everyone aged 18 to 60, set initially at no less than half the minimum wage.
- Reduce the pension age to open jobs for young people, with a pension of no less than half the minimum wage and no loss of accrued benefits.

Public services and social rights

- Mass public housing close to schools, campuses, work and transport; upgrade informal settlements without evictions.
- Free, high-quality public healthcare, including mental health, sexual and reproductive healthcare, addiction treatment and disability support.
- Safe, reliable and affordable publicly owned transport, moving towards free public transport for students, unemployed people and low-paid workers.
- Free universal broadband and public access to devices, libraries and community technology centres.
- Universal access to sport, arts, recreation and safe public spaces under democratic community control.
- Defend migrants and refugees; equal access to services and equal labour rights for all.

Make the capitalist class pay

- Reverse corporate tax cuts and impose steeply progressive taxes on corporate profits, wealth, high incomes, luxury consumption and speculative transactions.

- Stop illicit financial flows and recover wealth lost through corruption and corporate tax evasion under worker and community oversight.
- Repudiate illegitimate public debt and redirect debt-service spending to jobs, education, housing and healthcare.
- Nationalise the banks, mines, major industries, energy, telecommunications, transport, construction and large retail monopolies under democratic workers' control and management.
- Draw these resources together in a democratic socialist plan of production based on social need, ecological sustainability and international cooperation.

PART FIVE JOBS FOR YOUTH CAMPAIGN

From unemployment statistics to organised power

The Jobs for Youth campaign must organise young people as a collective force, not process them as individual applicants. CV collection can help map qualifications, experience and aspirations, but the campaign's purpose is not to deliver young people into another database. It is to expose the contradiction between vast social needs and mass unemployment, formulate demands, compel negotiations and build the power to win permanent jobs.

The campaign should unite unemployed youth with school and tertiary students preparing to enter the labour market, young workers in insecure jobs, public-employment workers fighting for permanence and trade unionists capable of linking community mobilisation to workplace action.

Campaign objectives

1. Build democratic Jobs for Youth committees in communities, campuses, colleges and workplaces, federated at municipal, provincial and national level.
2. Compile a democratic youth employment register recording unemployment, qualifications, work experience, barriers to employment and the socially useful work young people identify in their communities.
3. Audit vacancies, understaffing and unmet needs in schools, clinics, municipalities, ECD, housing, transport, environmental services, arts and sport.
4. Adopt local and national memoranda combining immediate demands with the programme for permanent public employment and economic transformation.
5. Force government, municipalities and major employers into public negotiations with elected and recallable youth delegates.
6. Build coordinated mass action with trade unions, community organisations, student structures and public-employment workers.

The campaign method

Organise and map

Call open youth unemployment assemblies. Elect committees with gender balance, representation of disabled and LGBTQI+ youth, migrants, students, young workers and different neighbourhoods. Map unemployed youth and social needs ward by ward. Protect personal information and never hand CVs to institutions without the informed consent of those concerned.

Formulate demands

Each committee should combine the national Platform with locally determined demands: unfilled municipal posts, closed clinics, ECD shortages, abandoned buildings, unsafe schools, environmental hazards and infrastructure backlogs. This connects the right to work with the work society urgently needs.

Submit and negotiate

Deliver memoranda to municipalities, provincial departments, the Department of Employment and Labour and major employers through mass delegations. Demand stamped acknowledgement, written answers and public meetings within 14 working days. Elected delegates must report every offer and discussion back to mass meetings before decisions are taken.

Escalate

Where authorities refuse to respond, organise pickets, occupations, community shutdowns, coordinated provincial marches and national days of action. Seek solidarity action from trade unions and workplace committees. Publicise every unfilled post, broken promise and refusal to negotiate.

Win without being demobilised

Partial victories must strengthen the campaign. Placements must be transparent and collectively monitored, not distributed through patronage. No committee member or political office-bearer may control job lists for personal advantage. Campaign structures must remain active until temporary workers are permanent, every placement carries full rights and the wider programme is won.

Immediate national demands of the campaign

- Create one million permanent public and community-service jobs as the first phase of a programme for full employment.
- Immediately fill all funded vacancies and publish every vacancy and funded-but-unfilled post.
- Convert recurring EPWP and public-employment functions into permanent municipal and public-service posts.
- Guarantee every school-leaver and graduate a choice of a permanent job, paid apprenticeship or fully funded further education place.
- No youth wage subsidy for employers that replace existing workers or subsidise poverty wages. Open company accounts before any public assistance is granted.
- Nationalise companies that retrench while profitable, close viable workplaces or hoard productive capacity, under democratic workers' control.
- Adopt a national plan for reindustrialisation and a just transition, developed and controlled by workers, youth and affected communities.

Jobs are a right Organise to win them

PART SIX PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Build from below

1. Convene launch assemblies in schools, campuses, colleges, workplaces and communities to debate and adopt the Platform.
2. Elect local youth and student committees with written mandates, regular report-backs, transparent finances and the right of immediate recall.
3. Establish issue-based working groups for education, jobs, gender-based violence, communications, political education and solidarity.
4. Link local committees in municipal and district coordinating councils while allowing participating organisations to retain their identities.
5. Convene provincial assemblies and a national congress to adopt a final Platform, elect leadership and agree a national plan of action.

A proposed campaign sequence

Phase	Organising Task
One — Prepare	Discussion circles; activist training; translate and popularise the Platform; identify convenors and allies.
Two — Assemble	Open youth and student assemblies; elect committees; map unemployment, vacancies and community needs.
Three — Demand	Adopt local memoranda; mass delivery to municipalities, departments, campuses and employers; set deadlines.
Four — Unite	Coordinate with trade unions, women's and community structures, EPWP workers and student organisations.
Five — Escalate	Provincial marches, occupations and coordinated national action where demands are ignored.
Six — Consolidate	Hold a national congress; assess victories; adopt the next programme; strengthen permanent organisation.

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Organising task

One Prepare

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Two Assemble

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Six Consolidate

Hold a national congress; assess victories; adopt the next programme; strengthen permanent organisation.

Methods of struggle

- Mass meetings, petitions, pickets, marches, occupations, boycotts, stayaways and strikes determined democratically by those involved.
- Campus and school campaigns linked across institutions instead of isolated annual protests.
- Political education on capitalism, socialism, the history of youth and worker struggle, and practical organising skills.
- Campaign media produced by participants: testimonies, local audits, newsletters, posters, videos, radio interventions and public meetings.
- Defence committees and legal support against victimisation, police repression, disciplinary action and political intimidation.
- International solidarity with youth, students and workers fighting war, imperialism, dictatorship, racism, austerity and environmental destruction.

Democratic safeguards

- All representatives must be elected, accountable and subject to recall.
- Representatives receive no privileges; expenses must be necessary, approved and publicly reported.
- No political party, NGO, funder, state institution or individual leader may substitute itself for the democratic decisions of the movement.
- Reject patronage, tender opportunities and control of job or bursary lists as methods of buying support.
- Guarantee full debate, the right to organise tendencies and unity in democratically agreed action.
- Actively develop women, working-class, LGBTQI+, disabled, migrant and rural youth leadership without tokenism.

PART SEVEN THE MOVEMENT WE MUST BUILD

Towards a Marxist Youth and Student Movement

The fragmentation of struggle is one of the ruling class's greatest advantages. School learners mobilise separately from university students; unemployed youth separately from precarious workers; campuses separately from communities. Existing student and youth organisations are frequently tied to parliamentary parties, bureaucratic careers or access to state resources. A new movement must overcome these divisions without demanding that every participating structure dissolve itself.

We propose a Marxist Youth and Student Movement organised on a federal basis. Learner structures, student formations, youth groups, campaign committees and individual activists should unite around a common Platform and coordinated action while retaining the right to organise and argue for their views. The movement must be socialist, democratic, internationalist and rooted in the working class.

Unity with workers women and communities

Youth cannot defeat unemployment or transform education alone. The power to reorganise the economy lies above all with the working class, whose labour keeps society running. The youth movement must therefore build active links with shop stewards, trade-union members and workplace committees, while challenging union leaders who substitute negotiation from above for mobilisation from below.

The struggle must also unite with a working-class women's movement and a socialist civic federation. Free ECD, safety, housing, transport, healthcare, education and jobs cross every artificial boundary between sectors. Joint campaigns can begin to rebuild the class unity that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s on a clearer socialist foundation.

For a mass workers party on a socialist programme

South Africa's capitalist parties offer different managers for the same system. Young people are mobilised during elections and abandoned afterwards. A mass workers party must arise from organised struggle, with representatives who take only the wage of a skilled worker, remain accountable to the movement and can be recalled.

Such a party would not postpone socialism to an undefined future. It would link every immediate demand to the transfer of economic power from the capitalist class to working people. It would fight for a workers' government that places the commanding heights of the economy under democratic public ownership and begins the socialist transformation of society.

An international struggle

Capitalism is a world system. War, climate breakdown, debt, unemployment and migration cross national borders, while multinational corporations move money and production in search of profit. Socialism cannot be secured in one country alone. The movement must link its struggle to workers and youth across Africa and internationally, oppose imperialism and war, and support a voluntary socialist federation of Africa as part of a socialist world.

CONCLUSION

Fight for every demand and fight for socialism

The demands in this Platform can begin to transform the lives of millions. They are achievable because South Africa possesses enormous wealth, productive capacity, skill and human creativity. What prevents their achievement is not scarcity in the abstract, but the ownership and control of society's resources by a capitalist minority.

We will fight for every classroom, residence, grant, apprenticeship, permanent post and wage increase. In doing so, we will expose the limits imposed by capitalism and build the organisation needed to overcome them. The struggle for reforms and the struggle for socialism are not separate roads. Properly connected through a transitional programme, they form one struggle for working-class power.

Fifty years after the Soweto Uprising, a new generation must enter history on its own feet. Let the commemoration of 1976 become the starting point for rebuilding militant student organisation, uniting unemployed youth, organising young workers and reconnecting youth with the power of the working class.

Organise Educate Mobilise

For education jobs dignity and socialism

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This circulation draft updates and restructures the Final Youth and Student Platform dated 28 August 2025 and integrates the Jobs for Youth campaign proposal developed in 2026.