

## Re-imagining Tomorrow: Our Turn. Our Time. Our Future - Youth Month

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Who would have thought our present would be a deadly norm, filled with anxiety and suspecting every person, second-guessing every decision and action and be bound by the chains of the unknown? A global pandemic has become a monster uniting a whole planet into one unit, unlike borders and continents that kept the separation of powers alive, cruel and unruly. It is now that we realise the importance of the little things that are taken for granted, such as health, water, hygiene, food security and so much more.

It is now that our imaginations need to spread into creating a futuristic yet able reality, into changing the norms of the unknown and making the most of it. We can reimagine tomorrow by making changes today, through one simple thought process called 'to begin'. Our current situation, especially due to the pandemic (COVID-19), has created a dramatic rude awakening for all; as such, we have seen the good, the bad and the worst, such as the youth taking a major knock concerning the new normal.

Life as we knew it used to be simple, fast-paced and easy without any major concerns such as a deadly contagious disease. 'One hundred and forty-nine more people have died after contracting the coronavirus bringing the national death toll to 58,590 since the beginning of the pandemic, wearing of masks and a spiral of sicknesses' (News 2021).

The way youth unemployment has worsened fills us with sadness from memories such as attendance of classes and graduations, which added to our development and life experiences; the new normal has become an online experience that is completely separate from our actual memories of what was. 'COVID-19 has dramatically reshaped the way global education is delivered. Millions of learners were affected by educational institution closures due to the pandemic, which resulted in the largest online movement in the

history of education. With this sudden shift away from classrooms in many parts of the globe, universities had to rapidly shift to virtual and digital strategies.’ (El 2021)

It is our tomorrow where youth unemployment is targeted and tackled, with solutions so that young and old people struggling to find work can open businesses that will thrive and so that no corruption will stunt that progress. ‘Public, private, and social sector leaders are taking urgent steps to manage the fast-evolving crisis of jobs and work. But there is room—and need for—greater focus, speed, boldness, and innovation’ (Fine 2020). The government should be able to assist and also incorporate private business to help fund upcoming small and big business ventures, without overpowering those who are at the mercy and in need of funds for structure but allowing one to grow and establish on their own. The means of payback will be through those investments that can be fostered through employment creation and profit share, allowing the start-ups to be independent enough to grow.

Our time is now, we don’t look back but forward to make this new idea a reality with possibilities. Now is the time to think outside the box and do all that could never be done, as we have seen that life has taken a dramatic turn into a slow-paced phase, allowing alternative ways to navigate around the norm. The lockdown in South Africa has channelled new innovative means to survive as ‘innovation has been seen in the explosion of e-commerce during the pandemic as many people avoided shopping malls for fear of contracting COVID-19. The work-from-home experiment has been made easier by virtual platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. In health and medicine, technology has paved the way for COVID-19 vaccines to be developed within months—something unprecedented, as vaccines usually take years to be developed (after many failed trials) and authorised by regulators for use. Technology, especially on the vaccine development front, could transform Africa’ (Mahlaka 2021).

Tomorrow brings new possibilities, some already instilled such as the fourth industrial revolution. ‘The Fourth Industrial Revolution may indeed have the potential to “robotize” humanity and thus to deprive us of our heart and soul. But as a complement to the best parts of human nature—creativity, empathy, stewardship—it can also lift humanity into a new collective and moral consciousness based on a shared sense of destiny’ (Schwab 2016). This enables innovation where people are starting to be multifunctional, the need to be in a closed space such as an office falls away and is replaced by technology and the cyber world. The appreciation of technology will introduce smart business at the click of a button, for example, e-markets, content creation, online shopping, online classes and tutoring and e-learning in its broadest sense will also include, for example, banking, online fundraising, e-management, etc. This shift transitions us from the norm of being

community-based, to being cyber connected without any hassles of leaving your current location. Money is made easy and more user friendly and safe at the click of a button.

It is according to this notion that we are looking at tomorrow in a technological sense which can provide freedom, harmony and efficiency to our lives and what they ought to be, and as the youth is paving the way for the next generations to come, it is clear that the techno world has become and will remain our oyster.

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