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Red October Campaign



People's Red Caravan



YCLSA – 10 Fronts of struggle



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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

1. A Red October must leave something behind

GBV & FEMICIDE CRISIS

2. Ekurhuleni killings demand more than policing
Umsebenzi Online

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

3. From Motlhaba to a movement – inside the People's Red Caravan
Buti Manamela

4. Dispatch from Gladstone, Thaba Nchu
Thulile Kumalo

5. Charity, campaign or revolutionary method?
Lucian Davids

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS & PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

6. The PRC is building people's power where the people live
Tenanile Mngomezulu

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2026

7. The ballot paper is just the beginning
Tsholofelo Maseko

8. The Alliance and the Local Government Elections – why the SACP had to contest independently
Phillip Dexter

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

9. Who does the work when the state fails?
Thulile Kumalo

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS – POLITICAL EDUCATION

10. Chommy-na-Chommy cartoon strips – a fresh way to spread the message
Tsholofelo Maseko

YOUNG REDS

11. Why should anyone join the YCL today?
Buti Manamela

YOUNG REDS – POLITICAL EDUCATION

12. Building youth power for socialism – launch of the Eddie Roux Political School
Exlira Giose-Davids

YOUNG REDS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

13. Young Reds rally support for SACP
Lebogang Pule

YOUNG REDS – YOUTH MANIFESTO

14. Ten fronts, one struggle – what must be built on the road to socialism?
Thabile Lenkwane

YOUNG REDS – REVOLUTIONARY INSPIRATIONS

15. Tupac Shakur: 30 years on – lessons from genuine revolutionaries
Lesego Masisi



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EDITORIAL

A Red October must leave something behind



The SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila with community members in Qoboqobo, in Amahlathi Local Municipality under Amatole District Municipality, Eastern Cape, ahead of the SACP Red October 2026-27 campaign launch, 4 October, in Komga, Ncumisa Kondlo District, Eastern Cape. This year's Red October Campaign aims to mobilise workers and impoverished communities around the Party's manifesto focus on community power for the Local Government Elections.

Red October arrives this year with a question that cannot be answered from a platform alone. What will be stronger when the campaign ends? A branch? A cooperative? A public maintenance team? A community able to read its municipal budget and insist that money reaches the work for which it was allocated? The answer will tell us more about the strength of our politics than the number of banners at a rally.

The launch in Qumrha on 4 October placed the campaign firmly on the terrain of everyday life. Solly Mapaila connected work,

water, electricity, roads, land and safety to the question of who controls resources and whose needs public institutions serve. He located the People's Red Caravan within that struggle and called for concrete municipal work plans, public capacity and accountable councillors. The SACP's independent election campaign seeks a mandate to carry this programme into local government. That is the point of departure for this edition.

The work before the vote

A community garden is not yet food sovereignty.

A cooperative registered on paper is not yet a functioning enterprise. A road repaired by volunteers is not yet a municipality capable of maintaining its infrastructure. But none of these beginnings should be dismissed. They can become places where people learn to make decisions together, keep accounts, resolve disagreements, develop skills and insist on what the state owes them.

"Self-reliance must strengthen the capacity of people to act."

The reports in this issue take us into that work. In conversation with Jan Oupa Nabane and Tinyiko Ntini, the People's Red Caravan becomes a discussion about feed costs, poultry registers, household producers and markets. These details matter. A movement that cannot say what happened to the chickens will struggle to explain what happened to the money. A project that counts everyone who receives food as a person placed in paid employment will conceal the next task it needs to confront.

Gladstone brings the same argument down to the ground: a pump, a shop, a production chain and the work of following through. The important question is what survives the activation. Who meets? Who records the harvest? Who repairs the equipment? Who negotiates with the municipality? Who is responsible when a promise is not fulfilled?

Self-reliance must strengthen the capacity of people to act. It must never provide a convenient language for public withdrawal. People organising food production still need water, land, roads, electricity and public support. Unemployed graduates applying their skills still need an economy capable of sustaining their work. The Caravan and the struggle for a capable local state belong together.

A programme before positions

Oscar Mabuyane's message of support at the launch deserves serious engagement. As reported by TimesLIVE, the ANC Eastern Cape

chairperson urged the two organisations to preserve their strategic relationship through electoral competition and consider cooperation after the vote where a governing programme makes it possible. His emphasis was on what municipal power would be used to do, rather than how offices would be divided. This is a reported account of his message, rather than a reproduction of the speech.

That opens a political discussion; it does not settle it. The SACP's independent mandate cannot be reduced in advance to a negotiating instrument. Nor can the historical relationship between the organisations relieve either of its responsibility to explain how it will govern. Cooperation has to be earned through an agreed programme that residents can see, debate and measure.

Will maintenance be funded and performed? Will municipal workers have equipment? Will procurement be open to scrutiny? Will land and infrastructure support productive cooperatives? Will councillors report to the communities that elected them? These are questions a governing agreement should answer before anyone discusses a mayoral chain. An alliance becomes meaningful through shared work and democratic decisions, not through a photograph of leaders standing together.

The ballot and the organisation

The local government elections on 4 November are a decisive opportunity. They are also a test of organisation. An election programme has to reach the street and the workplace, and it has to remain there after the count. Communities must be able to recognise their own demands in it and to use it as a measure of those who take office.

"An alliance becomes meaningful through shared work and democratic decisions..."

That requires more than an energetic final month. It requires branches capable of investigating conditions, listening to residents, developing

practical proposals and returning with answers. It requires candidates who can explain a budget as well as deliver a speech. It requires political education that gives members the confidence to question a report, including a report presented by their own leadership.

The Young Reds section raises precisely this challenge. Practical hope is a demanding phrase. A political school must produce sustained study and better organisation. A youth manifesto must connect the need for jobs to productive investment and collective capacity. Sport and culture can bring people together; organisation must give that encounter a continuing purpose.

Whose labour makes survival possible?

There is another measure we must apply throughout the campaign. When the tap runs dry, who carries the water? When public care fails, who stays home? When a street becomes unsafe, whose freedom is restricted first? The articles on social reproduction and women's safety force these questions into the centre of local politics.

We cannot celebrate community initiative while leaving women to provide an unlimited reserve of unpaid labour. A collective project must ask how its work is shared and who has a voice in its decisions. A municipality must account for the time, safety and dignity its failures take from residents. Public

"A collective project must ask how its work is shared and who has a voice in its decisions."

provision is part of freedom: it gives people time to learn, rest, work and organise.

This edition therefore reads Red October through the experience of people building power where they live. The election is part of that work. So are the cooperative, the study circle, the public repair team and the ward meeting that demands an answer. Our task is to make those connections practical and durable.

When the banners come down, people should have more than the memory of a rally. They should have stronger organisation, clearer demands and a greater capacity to act. That is what a red October must leave behind.

GBV & FEMICIDE CRISIS

Ekurhuleni killings demand more than policing



The killings of women in Ekurhuleni have forced South Africa once again to confront a reality that should never become normal: women continue to live, work and travel under the threat of patriarchal violence.

Archive Photo: Global Citizen

Key points

- Ekurhuleni killings show **GBV cannot be treated as only a policing problem**
- Ramaphosa **conceded measures fell short** and announced a case-recovery operation
- **Municipalities must make neighbourhoods safer** and coordinate local responses.
- Organised communities should **work with lawful institutions, not turn to vigilantism**
- The People's Red Caravan shows **organised communities become safer communities**

UMSEBENZI ONLINE

The murders of women in Ekurhuleni have exposed the urgency of a national response to gender-based violence — but lasting safety will also depend on organised communities, capable local government and social conditions that reduce vulnerability.

The killings of women in Ekurhuleni have forced South Africa once again to confront a reality that should never become normal: women continue to live, work and travel under the threat of patriarchal violence.

The South African Communist Party condemned the killings in September and called on law-enforcement authorities to leave no stone unturned in bringing those responsible to justice. The Party also made a wider point: violence against women cannot be treated only as a policing problem. It is also shaped by economic and social conditions, by

"We will not accept a society where violence becomes normal."

— Thabile Lenkwane

weakened public institutions and by the degree to which communities themselves are organised.

That wider approach is important. A specialised detective team, functioning crime intelligence, forensic capacity, responsive police stations and effective prosecution are indispensable. The state carries a constitutional responsibility to protect people and to ensure that perpetrators are identified, arrested and prosecuted.

National case-recovery

President Cyril Ramaphosa initially directed that the Ekurhuleni cases be prioritised and that no stone be left unturned. As public alarm mounted,

he addressed the nation on 29 September and acknowledged that the measures taken against gender-based violence and femicide had not been enough. He announced a national case-recovery operation focused on unresolved murders, attempted murders, rapes and serious sexual offences involving women and children, alongside strengthened forensic and investigative measures.

These interventions are necessary. But any successful response cannot rest on the national state alone.

The local state matters because violence takes place in actual communities: on streets, around transport nodes, in homes, taverns, schools, workplaces, parks and informal settlements. Lighting, abandoned buildings, broken infrastructure, unsafe public spaces, poor transport planning and weak local social services all shape the conditions in which people live. Municipalities therefore have a direct role in creating safer environments and in coordinating local responses.

Full mobilisation

The people themselves matter too. Communities cannot be reduced to



SACP

SACP CONDEMNS THE MURDER OF WOMEN ESPECIALLY IN KEMPTON PARK AND SURROUNDING AREAS

The South African Communist Party (SACP) condemns, in the strongest terms, the brutal murder of women especially in Kempton Park and surrounding areas.

The Party extends its deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims during this painful time.

The SACP calls on law enforcement authorities to leave no stone unturned in their pursuit of justice. Those responsible for these heinous crimes must be held accountable.

A truly free society must be one where all people can move freely and safely, without fear of criminal violence or violation. Democracy cannot claim its rightful place in society as long as women, men, children and families are forced to live in fear or face no-go zones within their own communities.

The SACP reaffirms its commitment to fighting gender-based violence and building communities rooted in safety, dignity, equality and justice for all.

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spectators waiting for the next police operation after another life has been lost. They need functioning Community Police Forums, neighbourhood and street structures, women's organisations, youth formations, faith communities, schools and civic organisations that can identify risks, support vulnerable households, share information lawfully and hold public institutions accountable.

YCLSA National Spokesperson Cde Thabile Lenkwane captured the urgency plainly: "We will not accept a society where violence becomes normal. We refuse to live in communities where families bury their loved ones while criminals continue to operate with impunity, where women and children live in fear, and where the loss of human life is reduced to another headline."

in the People's Red Caravan. Its work has often been associated with food production, poultry, cooperatives and household livelihoods. But its social significance is wider. In communities where the Caravan has operated, safety, health, social

"The local state matters because violence takes place in actual communities."

protection, gender relations, youth activity, sport and culture have also formed part of the work.

This matters because violence does not arise in a social vacuum. High unemployment, hunger, substance abuse, hopelessness, fractured community life and the absence of constructive opportunities do not mechanically cause violence, but they can deepen vulnerability and social breakdown. Giving people means of subsistence, strengthening collective activity and building social institutions are therefore part of creating communities in which violence has less room to reproduce itself.



Violence against women cannot be treated only as a policing problem – it is also shaped by economic and social conditions, by weakened public institutions and by the degree to which communities themselves are organised. Archive photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp

The task, however, is not to turn community mobilisation into vigilantism. It is to build organised communities that work with lawful institutions while insisting that those institutions perform their duties. Organisation must make it harder for criminality to hide, harder for abuse to be normalised and easier for residents to act collectively when danger appears.

People's Red Caravan interventions

Some of this social approach is already visible

rather than as an abstract lecture. Women's safety, men's responsibility, family relations, economic dependence and the dignity of women all become practical questions of community organisation. Emma Mashinini, who organised workers and fought for women's rights inside the labour movement, warned against separating the struggle of workers from the rest of their lives. "The whole life of a worker needs trade union involvement," she wrote, adding that this must include "the whole question of equality between men and women." Her insight remains relevant beyond the

“Communities cannot be reduced to spectators waiting for the next police operation after another life has been lost.”

workplace: emancipation cannot be divided into separate compartments.

That is why the response to the Ekurhuleni killings must become a national mobilisation with a local base. National government must strengthen investigation, prosecution and victim support. Municipalities must make neighbourhoods safer and more liveable. Police stations must work with communities and be accountable to them. Schools, unions, youth formations, churches and civic structures must confront the attitudes and practices that reproduce gender violence. Men, in particular, must take responsibility for challenging violence in homes, workplaces and communities.

Build social power

The point is not to shift the burden of safety from the state onto ordinary people. It is the opposite: to build enough organised social power to make the state work, to demand accountability from local and national institutions, and to prevent communities from becoming spaces in which criminals operate with impunity.

The President’s national intervention is therefore an important part of the response. Its success will depend on whether it reaches the street, the ward, the police station, the school and the household — and whether communities themselves are organised enough to sustain that work after national attention has moved elsewhere.

A society free from violence against women will

“Communities become safer when people cease to be isolated victims and become organised participants in shaping the conditions of their own lives.”

not be created by one task team, one speech or one campaign. It requires functioning institutions, economic and social transformation, and people organised in defence of one another. The lesson from the People’s Red Caravan is simple: communities become safer when people cease to be isolated victims and become organised participants in shaping the conditions of their own lives.

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

From Motlhabe to a movement – inside the People's Red Caravan



SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila with community activists at the People's Red Caravan activation in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal, in February 2026.

Key points

- **The Caravan's six activations** aim to build lasting organisation, not one-week mobilisations
- **Village cooperatives, household producers and community shops** link production, aggregation and local markets
- **Solving the market, feed costs and honest job-counting** determine whether projects become sustainable
- **Cooperatives need governance, record-keeping and rules** –secondary cooperatives and district committees must carry them
- **Self-reliance must not excuse the state** – organised communities can demand services



BUTI MANAMELA

I have to stop Comrade Jan Oupa Nabane to ask what he means by “layers”. We are discussing the People's Red Caravan, and he has moved into a detailed explanation of poultry production. These are the hens kept for eggs, he explains. Across the six activations we are discussing, he says, the programme has mobilised 2,400 of them.

Our conversation at Cosatu's Congress has taken us some distance from the business of the plenary. With Nabane and Comrade Tinyiko Ntini taking me through the Caravan, my notebook fills with the names of villages, feed costs, cooperative arrangements and questions about where the produce is sold.

Nabane is the YCLSA's Interim National Secretary. Here, however, he is also explaining the agricultural work he helps coordinate, down to the records kept when a chicken dies. It is through these details that the scale of the organisational task becomes clearer.

The conversation comes as the SACP prepares to contest local government elections independently, with a programme centred on building people's power where people live. The Caravan provides an opportunity to examine what that means in practice: how communities organise, what they can produce together, and whether the structures established during an activation can sustain themselves afterwards.

PRC activations

The first activation took place in Motlhabe, North West, in June 2025. Under the leadership of General Secretary Solly Mapaila, Party leaders and activists spent a week working alongside residents. Food insecurity was an immediate concern, but the programme also addressed community safety, social infrastructure and the organisation needed to continue the work.

In the chronology we work through, Matibidi in Mpumalanga followed in July, then Mqhekezweni in the Eastern Cape in October and Ganspan in the Northern Cape in December. The programme moved to Hlokozi, in the Ixopo area of KwaZulu-Natal, in February, and Gladstone in the Free State in May.

The geography matters. These are communities in which the organisers have sought to connect access to land, agricultural skills and collective labour with the immediate need to eat. But Nabane and Ntini's account moves beyond the planting that takes place during a week of mobilisation. Increasingly, their attention is on the arrangements that keep production going.

Nabane is careful about what can be promised.

"We are not government," he says. "But we can give them a programme that is sustainable."

Village cooperatives

The village agricultural cooperative, or VAC, is central to that approach. It provides a structure through which the community can organise production, manage the assets mobilised during

the Caravan and make decisions about their use. A village may have several production sites, he explains, without needing a separate cooperative for every plot.

There is also a place for people producing food at home. Nabane calls them household food producers. Their contribution should not be dismissed as incidental simply because they are working on a smaller piece of land.

He explains the arrangement with spinach. One household has a crop ready, another has its own harvest, and the cooperative has produce from the communal site. These can be brought together for

sale. The cooperative must record whose produce has been supplied and account for the money due to each household.

This is what they mean by aggregation. It gives a household producer a way into a larger, organised market without requiring that person to work permanently at the communal site.

The consumer cooperative, operating a community shop, is another part of the arrangement. The agricultural cooperative supplies produce; the shop provides a local outlet. Production and consumption begin to be organised together.

Solving the market

"You can't say people must plant," Nabane argues, and leave the question of the market unanswered. He describes efforts to secure buyers beyond the immediate cooperative membership. Those

"We are not government, but we can give them a programme that is sustainable."

"You can't say people must plant and leave the question of the market unanswered."

relationships matter because a planting campaign can be successful on the day and still leave producers with nowhere to sell their harvest. The work therefore includes finding customers, organising collection and making sure sales are properly recorded.

Poultry brings its own difficulties. The birds need feed continuously, and the cost can absorb much of what egg sales bring in. Nabane says this has pushed the organisers to pay greater attention to feed and agro-processing as part of the programme's development.

He also describes links between activities that might otherwise appear unrelated. In Ganspan, recycling work includes making egg trays. The poultry operation needs packaging; another part of the local programme can help provide it.

Counting jobs honestly

I ask how many jobs have been created.

The answer requires more care than the question. Nabane distinguishes between people participating in production, households receiving food and participants receiving money. In some groups, people are working and eating from what is produced without yet receiving a wage. Elsewhere, there have been small distributions from the proceeds.

These are important gains for households facing hunger. They should not, however, all be recorded as paid jobs. Whether the cooperatives can generate reliable incomes is a further test of their development.

Nabane then shows me the reporting arrangements. One poultry register starts with 400 birds and records 375 remaining. There is provision to record deaths and their suspected causes. He explains how the information is collected weekly, allowing those supporting the projects to understand what is happening and where intervention may be needed.

His agricultural background, including training in smart agriculture in China, becomes apparent

as he moves between production and record-keeping. But he is equally occupied with teaching people how the cooperative itself should function. Financial management is part of the training. So is cooperative governance. Members need to understand the constitution, the responsibilities of the board, the arrangements for meetings and the procedures through which decisions are taken. An asset belonging to the cooperative cannot simply be used or distributed because an individual thinks it should be. Collective ownership requires agreed rules, and those rules have to survive disagreement.

Nabane acknowledges that this takes time. Reporting is uneven. People have different levels of experience, and getting information submitted consistently remains a challenge. The organisers are learning that establishing a structure is only the beginning of making it work.

Beyond the farm

The Caravan's activity also extends beyond agriculture. Our discussion covers health, education and social protection; community safety; sport, arts and culture; and waste management and recycling.

Nabane describes work on damaged classrooms and clinic facilities, as well as helping residents

deal with missing identity documents and birth-registration difficulties. These matters affect whether people can access services and support. They require engagement with public institutions, alongside the practical work undertaken by volunteers.

He returns, too, to the use of community spaces. The park developed in Ganspan, he tells me, has subsequently hosted an anniversary gathering of the Party. A space created during an activation can continue to bring people together for recreation, political activity and ordinary social life.

That continuing use is significant. The Caravan leaves behind responsibilities and opportunities

"The Caravan's future will depend on strengthening those connections after each activation — and after the election campaign."

around which people can organise again. A cooperative needs its members. A production site needs regular work. A community facility needs to be looked after.

Linking the cooperatives

The next phase, as Nabane describes it, is to connect the primary cooperatives through a secondary cooperative. This remains work in progress. Its purpose would be to undertake tasks that an individual village cooperative cannot easily manage on its own, including access to more expensive machinery and support for expanded production.

Smart agriculture features in these plans, but so does the more immediate question of organisational capacity. Equipment will not resolve weak financial management or a board that does not meet.

Nabane also wants the knowledge now concentrated among a few organisers to reach Party structures more widely. He proposes that district committees establish a dedicated arrangement for the Caravan, so that supporting the cooperatives becomes a continuing organisational responsibility.

This is an important condition for expansion. Six activations cannot become a wider movement through the efforts of a handful of people indefinitely. Districts and branches must understand the production, the governance arrangements and the difficulties in the communities where they work. The electoral significance follows from this.

From cooperatives to elections

A cooperative trying to produce food has concrete questions to put to a municipality: access to land and water, usable roads, functioning infrastructure and places to sell. An organised group of producers can pursue those questions collectively, keep records of what has been promised and return to demand an account.

The SACP's electoral programme connects naturally to this kind of continuing organisation.

But self-reliance must not become an excuse for the state to abandon its responsibilities. Communities should be supported to act together while continuing to demand the public services and developmental investment they are entitled to.

That distinction must remain clear throughout the election campaign. A cooperative cannot repair every road or carry the responsibilities of a public health system. Nor should hunger be presented as something poor households must overcome through their own effort alone.

Feeding the movement

What Nabane and Ntini describe is an attempt to build the organised capacity through which people can improve part of their immediate circumstances and strengthen their ability to fight for more.

There are unfinished projects, limited resources and questions about income that still need answers. The plans for a secondary cooperative will require patient work. But the connections between household producers, village cooperatives, community shops and Party structures give substance to the idea of a movement.

The Caravan's future will depend on strengthening those connections after each activation — and after the election campaign. The hens will still need feeding. Produce will still need buyers. Members will still need an account of what happened to their money.

For a Party asking the country to support people's power, that continuing work is part of the argument.

Cde Buti Manamela is the editor of Umsebenzi Online, a member of the SACP Central Committee and the former organiser for the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union.

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

Dispatch from Gladstone, Thaba Nchu



SACP leaders and community members at the People's Red Caravan in Gladstone, Free State. Photo: SACP

Key points

- The PRC activation built a **full food-production chain** in Gladstone
- A **communally owned cooperative store opened**, selling local produce
- Volunteers improvised a pump, roads and repairs where **municipal services lacking**
- Free State leadership met in Gladstone to **ensure follow-through**
- Provincial inspection found real promise, but **sustainability still needs nurturing**

gravel tracks cut soft by the last rains, a sports ground that hasn't seen a proper mowing in a long time.

This is where the SACP chose to plant its red tents for the latest activation of the People's Red Caravan (PRC), and where, weeks later, the party's Free State leadership would choose to hold its provincial executive meeting too — deliberately, pointedly, so that nobody could mistake the week's work for a one-off.

Morning – the compost heap and the coop

By first light, the food-production stream is already the busiest corner of the village. Near a row of backyard plots, someone is turning a compost heap that's been building for days — kitchen scraps, manure, dry grass, layered and left to become something usable. A few metres on, a



THULILE KUMALO

Gladstone doesn't announce itself on the road into Thaba Nchu. It's the kind of village a bakkie can pass through in under a minute if the driver isn't looking for it — a scatter of homesteads,

newly built structure holds the start of a piggery; further along, hives sit at the treeline, deliberately upwind of the vegetable beds. Egg trays are stacked outside a shed where a fruit-tree nursery has gone in alongside the household gardens.

None of this is decorative. It's a full production chain being assembled in a week: crops, eggs, honey, fruit, pork, compost — and, feeding all of it, an agro-processing effort meant to turn raw produce into something that can actually be sold, not just eaten. A volunteer hauling crates toward the newly opened cooperative store puts it plainly to no one in particular: growing the vegetables was always going to be the easy part. Getting them off the plot and into someone's hands, at a fair price, without a middleman skimming it first — that's the actual project.

The pump and the road grader

Out past the fields, a groundwater pump is being tested, the kind of unglamorous infrastructure that decides whether any of the morning's planting survives the dry months ahead. It's meant to serve both the crop plots and the livestock — water that doesn't depend on the municipality remembering Gladstone exists.

On the main track through the village, a grader is cutting fresh lines into gravel roads that residents have been driving and walking on in whatever state the last rain left them. Sports grounds get the same treatment. Elsewhere, teams move between public buildings with paint tins, spanners and grass-cutters — plumbing fixed here, a wall repainted there, small repairs that add up to a village looking, for the first time in a while, like someone is responsible for it. A waste-recycling effort gets going alongside all this, more intention than infrastructure so far, but a start.

The argument under the gazebo

Not every conversation this week is about seedlings. Under the gazebo where the food-security teams take their breaks, there's a harder discussion running underneath the friendlier one — about what happens when the tents come down. Someone raises the province's own history with this: campaigns that arrive with energy and don't survive contact with the following month.

The answer this time, at least on paper, is that the party isn't treating Gladstone as a single stop. The provincial leadership has scheduled its own executive meeting here, weeks after the activation ends, specifically so the follow-through isn't optional.

There's a second, more political argument sitting just beneath the first. Some of the same organisers spending their week grading roads and building coops are also part of the machinery gearing up for November's local government elections — registering voters, training election structures, identifying candidates. A few in the crowd want to know plainly whether Gladstone's food gardens are really about Gladstone, or about a ballot still five months off. Nobody pretends the two are unconnected. The answer offered, more than once, is that they don't see a contradiction: a cooperative store that still exists in December is itself the argument for a vote in November, no speech required.

Underneath both arguments is a rawer one, rarely said in full sentences but present in the way people talk about their own municipality: frustration that services that should come from local government keep having to be improvised by volunteers with a road grader and a paintbrush instead. It surfaces again later in blunter form, once the party leadership arrives — complaints about municipal mayors being shuffled for reasons nobody in the village finds convincing, and a suspicion, voiced more than once, that some of the sidelined officials were pushed out less for failure than for which structures they belonged to.

Culture returns to Gladstone

Late in the week, something else comes back to the village that has nothing directly to do with food or infrastructure: horse racing, a local tradition that had quietly stopped happening. Getting it going again takes coordination — riders, a cleared track, an audience that has to be told it's actually happening this time — but by the day it runs, it pulls people out of their yards who hadn't been near the main tent all week. Sport and culture were always on the PRC's list of streams, but this is the one that visibly turns a work programme into something the village wants to keep doing on its own.

The inspection

Toward the end of the process, when the party's provincial structures arrive in Gladstone for their own meeting, part of the day is spent walking the ground rather than sitting in it — an inspection in loco, checking the coop, the piggery, the hives, the graded road, the store shelves, against what was reported on paper. Free State provincial secretary Charles Stofile and provincial spokesperson Phillip Kganyago are among those making the rounds. The verdict that comes out of it afterward is careful rather than triumphant: the projects are judged to be showing real promise, but the party is explicit that “promise” is not the same as “sustainable” — that what's been planted here still needs nurturing well past the week that planted it.

What counts as a victory here

The clearest win of the week isn't a single planted row or a repaired pipe — it's the cooperative store itself opening its doors, communally owned, stocked in part with what the village's own plots have started producing. It's a small building doing a large job: proving, in a way no report language can, that food grown here can also be sold here, on terms the growers set rather than a market elsewhere.

The quieter win is procedural, almost bureaucratic, and probably the one that matters most in the long run: the decision to hold the next formal party meeting in Gladstone itself, rather than in a provincial office somewhere else. It's a small act with a specific meaning — that the caravan's red flags coming down doesn't mean the party's attention leaves with them.

By evening, the graders have gone quiet, the store has closed for the day, and the compost heap sits turned and waiting for its next layer. Nothing about Gladstone looks transformed. What's changed is smaller and harder to photograph: a pump that works, a road that's passable, a shelf with produce on it, and a provincial structure that has, on paper at least, committed to coming back and checking.

Cde Thulile Kumalo is the National Gender Coordinator for the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union. She writes in her personal capacity

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

Charity, campaign or revolutionary method?



People's Red Caravan participants on cultivated land in Ganspan, Northern Cape.

Key points

- The PRC is a **revolutionary campaign**, not charity
- **70% of surveyed house** holds face moderate or severe food insecurity
- **Land ownership** lies at the heart of the development problem
- **Charity perpetuates dependency** – the PRC aims to restore dignity

What happened to change?

A valid question that many need to understand. Since the dawn of democracy and the promise of change, why have some things not changed yet? Poverty is deepening, inequality is deepening, crime has deepened, etc.

The answer lies in the process of revolution. Our revolution is not yet complete. During the negotiations leading to the first democratic elections in 1994, major sections of the economy at large had not changed hands. These sectors are mainly privately owned. Private and white-owned. These critical sectors relate to agriculture, mining, manufacturing, banking and other financial services, construction, retail and transport/freight.

Given this reality, much of the money that workers continue to spend their income in any of these sectors, unfortunately, reintroduces money into their cycle. Therefore, it has become difficult for our people to see any real changes in their communities, outside of some key projects that the governing Alliance took in transforming the lives of South Africans generally. Be that as it may, much



LUCIAN DAVIDS

The flagship programme of the SACP, the People's Red Caravan, is far removed from charity. It is a revolutionary campaign to combat the ever-present challenges of food and income insecurity.

Thirty-two years post-apartheid, our people are still largely constrained by these same challenges that were entrenched during white rule in South Africa.

is left wanting. The PRC is currently focused on practically introducing a shift in these relations.

What are we faced with?

Food insecurity, first. South Africa leads the continent in agricultural exports, but there is massive food insecurity in the country. Food Forward SA surveyed 796 households and the results show that food insecurity is widespread and persistent among the ones sampled. The study employed two periods of testing and research: 12-month and 30-day. Using the 12-month reference period, 70% of households fall into either moderate (45%) or severe (25%) food insecurity, with only 30% reporting mild or adequate food access. With the 30 day period, these are much higher, as illustrated below by figures from Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit surveys.

Income and wealth inequality

	SALDRU SURVEY 2025	SALDRU SURVEY 2025	GHS 2023
Item	12-month reference period	30-day reference period	12-month reference period
Worried	69.9%	81.7%	23.7%
Healthy	47.3%	82.4%	23.4%
Few foods	56.3%	80.1%	23.6%
Skipped	43.7%	78.8%	16.7%
Ate less	58.7%	73.9%	19.5%
Run out	35.0%	77.9%	17.9%
Hungry	24.7%	73.3%	13.4%
All day	9.9%	87.2%	9.4%

The wealth and income gap in South Africa remains a terrible reminder of the past. The patterns that underpinned separate development during the apartheid period and subsequent periods of subjugation remain intact. Income inequality is also gendered, racial and obviously class-based, with women, black people and workers being the categories on the short end of the stick. Wealth, we know for a fact, is still controlled within white households. The top 0.1% of the population owns 25% of the wealth. Globally, according to the World Inequality Report, the top 10% of the global population owns 76% of the global wealth.

"The wealth and income gap in South Africa remains a terrible reminder of the past."

The land question

The question of the control of land actually lies at the heart of the ownership and development problem in South Africa. Land and agriculture generally is largely concentrated in white hands. Therefore, any successes of the land does not benefit black South Africa in any substantial way. Land that is not publicly and commonly owned cannot be used in any sense of the "term" development. Though development is taking place, we must always critically evaluate what this development is and for whom.

Development certainly does not benefit black South Africans, who are still considered disadvantaged - their realities did not change much since 1994. Therefore, the Party has taken up the issue of a referendum on the land question with the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). This is certainly in the fulfilment of our strategy. Two things that we must caution

against: (1) is the attempt of the development of neo-feudalism or some semblance of feudal relations developing in this appropriation of land to the people; and (2) is the delay on this question of the land, some clear guidelines need to be communicated to the people of South Africa on how we intend to proceed

post-elections.

Does the PRC fill that gap?

Yes. The People's Red Caravan does this in a very practical way. As presented in our previous section, agriculture is mostly concentrated in big private firms which are organised under commercial farming, meaning all of their produce is for the market. On the other end, most black communities focus on subsistence farming because they literally do not have the tools, the infrastructure, the land and the capital to focus on this.

The things that black communities have are labour, skills, hunger and poverty. Unfortunately, given all of these challenges, most of the food must be considered for survival rather than sale. This is not to say that these communities do not generate an income from this at all. But it is insignificant if we have to compare this against the dominators in this field. If we consider that, with little to no land, and with very little or no chance of turning an income in this way, the situation looks bleak. Therefore, when the PRC started, it looked at all of these aspects and created a campaign that would address these problems.

"The People's Red Caravan goes way beyond charity."

The People's Red Caravan goes way beyond charity. Charity does not restore dignity. It's a temporary way of filling a gap. Charity does not remove dependency. It perpetuates it. It allows the bourgeoisie to feel better about themselves.

Cde Lucian Davids is a member of the YCLSA National Interim Leadership Core

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS & PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

The PRC is building people's power where the people live



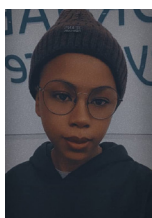
Through the PRC, SACP has supported community development, which is a key theme of the Party's local government election platform.

Key points

- **SACP local election manifesto** theme is Build People's Power Where We Live.
- The People's Red Caravan intertwines with **local development needs**
- **Municipalities must serve people**, not profit; insourcing is proposed.
- **Ward assemblies and social audits** must keep councillors accountable after elections.

For the first time since 1994, the SACP is contesting Local Government Elections independently. Under the theme "Build People's Power Where We Live", the SACP has launched its own Local Government Election Manifesto – a political vision to put municipalities back in the hands of the people.

The SACP Manifesto is not sitting in the boardroom and coming with empty promises and disappearing after the elections, but it is being taken to the people by the People's Red Caravan. The PRC is putting the vision of the Manifesto into practice across the country. — building food gardens, co-ops, fixing clinics, and organising communities to take back control of their municipalities. The goal is clear: put the working class and poor at the centre of local government and transform municipalities from places that only deliver services into spaces



TENANILE MNGOMEZULU

For 30 years we organised behind others. In 2026 we go to war for our communities — in our own name.

where people organise, participate and hold power.

Our towns are in crisis

Across South Africa, the crisis in our communities is deepening. Millions still live with water cuts and power failures, with roads full of potholes and houses that are overcrowded. Unemployment is rising, communities are unsafe, and corruption has hollowed out municipal administration. These are not technical problems. They are political. They are the result of bad management, outsourcing, and a corrupt system that puts profit before people.

The SACP says it plainly: municipalities must serve people, not profit. Public money, public land, and public institutions must be used to meet the basic needs of the working class and poor. We cannot accept a local government that functions only for the rich and connected while the majority struggle for simple basic needs

Taking the message to every province

The SACP has therefore decided to take the Manifesto and the PRC to all nine provinces because the challenges are national, yet they show up differently in every ward. The manifesto cannot be held in meetings and conferences; it must be debated in villages, townships, informal settlements, workplaces, and street corners.

Through provincial launches we will hear community problems directly, recruit activists, build ward and street committees, and start campaigns around real demands. This is how we show that 2026 is not only about collecting votes. It is about building a working-class movement before, during and after elections. The manifesto is a tool for organising, not just for campaigning.

The People's Red Caravan: action, not talk

At the heart of this programme is the People's Red Caravan. It is our method of building people's power from below to end poverty and advance community self-reliance. SACP leaders go into communities to work alongside working-class and

poor people. Not as a charity handing out parcels, but to organise collective action around the things people need to live with dignity.

Through the PRC, SACP has supported community food production and processing, household gardens, co-operatives, and community stores. They have worked on health and clinic improvements, education and cultural programmes, community safety, and practical work to improve local facilities. They have built parks, graded roads, and created soccer and netball fields so that young people have space to play.

In *Gladstone, Free State Province*, the PRC has already supported crop production, household food production, egg and honey production, agro-processing, local aggregation, and a communally owned co-operative store.

These are not handouts. They are proof that when people organise, they can change their own conditions. But self-reliance must never be used as an excuse for the state to abandon its responsibilities.

"When municipalities fail, the organisation built through the PRC gives communities the tools to respond."

We organise people to do what they can together, and at the same time we organise them to demand what the government must do.

The PRC connects practical work with the bigger struggles for land, water, electricity, decent work, food security, functioning public services and developmental investment. Its success will be measured not only by what we build during an activation, but by the organisation, consciousness and continuing struggles we leave behind.

From campaigning to governing: one continuous struggle

The LGE manifesto and the PRC gives us a programme both for campaigning and for governing. Before elections, we go to residents with real questions, not slogans. Is your water reliable? Are your roads maintained? Where is the municipal budget going? Why are young people unemployed? Why outsource services when municipalities can do the work and create jobs?

Through ward assemblies, street committees and social audits, communities must take part in planning, budgeting and monitoring. On jobs, we propose youth cooperatives, local production and public investment. On corruption, we demand transparency in budgets, contracts, and tenders so that people can see where public money is going.

After elections, the same programme becomes the yardstick for accountability. If SACP councillors are elected, they must report back to open ward assemblies and practice participatory budgeting. When municipalities fail, the organisation built through the PRC gives communities the tools to respond. Budget monitors and social audits can track projects, watch spending, and raise problems early.

We will fight for insourcing and public provision. Instead of outsourcing everything to expensive contractors, municipalities must use their own workers. This protects jobs, strengthens public institutions, and improves services. The manifesto also links local government to land, housing, food security, safety, and health. Municipalities must use public land and resources to meet social needs and support collective production.

Power doesn't end at the ballot

"Build People's Power Where We Live" means democracy does not end at the ballot box. Voting is

important, but it is not enough. We need organised communities to hold representatives accountable every single day. As SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila said at the launch: *"A vote for the SACP is not a vote to become a spectator... but a vote to organise and impact decision-making for the working class for basic needs."*

The gains we seek will not be gifts from above. They will be won through organisation, struggle and democratic people's power. To the working class we say: organise as a class for yourself. Build the power where you live. Contest power in your own name. Join the ward assemblies. Build the street committees. Defend public services.

"The LGE manifesto and the PRC gives us a programme both for campaigning and for governing."

The People's Red Caravan must keep moving, deepening, and expanding. It must turn practical action into lasting organisation, and organisation into working-class power.

Our task is to help fix collapsing municipalities and build permanent structures street by street, section by section, ward by ward, province by province.

Cde Tenanile Mngomezulu is an activist of the SACP active in Linda Jabane District

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2026

The ballot paper is just the beginning



Community mobilisation in Tshwane for a strong SACP vote in the 4 November Local Government Elections. Photo: SACP

Key points

- Independent contestation **can strengthen the Alliance**
- Metsimaholo shows electoral work must **grow from workers' concrete struggles**
- Councillors must stay **rooted in the communities** that elected them
- The real task is **building an organised, conscious working class**



TSHOLOFELO MASEKO

On 4 November 2026, South Africans go to the polls in the Local Government Elections. For the South African Communist Party, this election means far more than a contest for council seats.

For a Party with more than a century of working-class organisation behind it, this is a major political development. But we must not start from the ballot paper. We must begin with the people.

Politics starts with people

We must begin with the worker who wakes before sunrise to travel to work. We must begin with the young person who has finished school but cannot find a job. We must begin with the mother who stretches a small income across food, electricity, transport and school expenses. We must begin with the municipal worker whose livelihood depends on a functioning public sector. We must begin with communities that have spent years demanding water, electricity, sanitation, roads, housing and public services. This is where politics becomes real.

Marxism-Leninism can sound like a language of political meetings and books. But its basic questions are strongly rooted in people's everyday lives: Who owns the country's wealth? Who controls production? Who benefits from economic decisions? The working class confronts these questions daily, even when it does not use Marxist terminology.

The road to independent contestation

Since 1994, the Party has largely participated in electoral politics through the ANC-led Alliance. Communist cadres serve in government, Parliament and municipalities while the Party continues to organise workers and advance its programme. Within the Party, however, a debate about independent electoral participation has long continued.

That debate developed over many years and grew in importance through the Party's congresses and special congresses. The 15th National Congress and subsequent decisions placed the Party on a path towards contesting elections in its own name, culminating in the decision to contest the 2026 Local Government Elections.

The SACP's independent contestation is not an abandonment of the Alliance. The Party points out that it can strengthen working-class political organisation and contribute to the transformation of the National Democratic Revolution towards socialism.

Lessons from Metsimaholo

Comrades can draw on the experience of Metsimaholo in the Free State, where the SACP contested the 2016/17 local election. That contest emerged from concrete struggles involving municipal workers and the broader community. Workers had been dismissed after a strike, and the Party had been involved in the struggle for their reinstatement. It all began with workers uniting.

The experience demonstrates something fundamental about Leninist politics: revolutionary politics must be connected to the concrete struggles of the masses. You cannot tell a worker

you are fighting capitalism while being absent when that worker loses their job.

This is the time to be practical rather than theoretical about working-class struggle. The Party must be present when workers fight for wages, when communities fight over rent, when young people march against unemployment, and when ordinary people try to understand why their lives remain difficult despite living in a democracy.

"Marxism-Leninism can sound like a language of political meetings and books. But its basic questions are strongly rooted in people's everyday lives."

Why local government matters

Local government is sometimes treated as simply about potholes, refuse collection and council meetings. For the working class, it is much more. A municipality makes decisions that directly affect people's

lives.

A family does not experience municipal electricity policy as an academic question; they experience it when the lights go off. Workers do not experience municipal restructuring as a theoretical debate; they experience it when their jobs become insecure.

This is why the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the state matters. The municipality operates within a capitalist society and cannot escape its contradictions simply because a particular councillor has good intentions. The struggle must therefore be organised around changing the balance of forces.

"Electoral politics carries a constant danger that representatives are absorbed into the institutions they are elected to serve."

Guarding against absorption into the council

Independent contestation also brings a particular responsibility. A communist councillor

cannot become disconnected from the people who put them in office. Electoral politics carries a constant danger that representatives are absorbed into the institutions they are elected to serve. The

councillor begins attending meetings, receiving an office and dealing with administrative procedures, and eventually becomes more familiar with the council than with the community. That cannot become the meaning of communist representation.

Hani's legacy on the doorstep

When comrades go door-to-door, they do not encounter political theory first. They encounter people facing different class struggles. In Mamelodi, workers told our leaders they had been waiting for the SACP to contest elections. Some said they recognise the SACP as an organisation that speaks openly about the interests of the working class; others associate its contestation with the revolutionary tradition represented by Cde Chris Hani.

For many working-class communities, the name Chris Hani still carries enormous political meaning. His legacy is not simply historical memory. It represents a particular conception of leadership: connected to ordinary people, committed to revolution and to the struggle for a society fundamentally different from capitalism.

To say the SACP is continuing the legacy of Cde Chris Hani must mean more than putting his face on posters. It means defending workers and standing with communities. And it must mean building the political consciousness workers need to understand that their individual struggles are connected to a much larger social system.

"In Mamelodi, workers told our leaders they had been waiting for the SACP to contest elections."

Beyond election day

The most important thing about the 2026 election is that the struggle will not end on election day. The real task is to build an organised, conscious and politically active working class.

The 4 November elections therefore represent a working-class struggle that began long before the ballot paper. The ballot paper is simply the beginning.

Cde Tsholofelo Maseko is the YCLSA District Head of Secretariat in Tshwane



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2026

The Alliance and the Local Government Elections – why the SACP had to contest independently

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104TH ANNIVERSARY

BUILDING PEOPLE'S POWER, SELF-RELIANCE AND PEOPLE'S ECONOMY

ISSUED BY SACP HQ WWW.SACP.ORG.ZA

Key points

- Contesting elections is a **return to the Party's pre-apartheid tradition**
- The Alliance is a **compact of autonomous organisations**, not one party
- **Unmet promises** and a **sidelined reconfiguration** document drove the decision
- The SACP **stays in the Alliance** while contesting independently
- An independent SACP can **mobilise disillusioned voters** for the broader movement



PHILLIP DEXTER

The SACP's decision to stand under its own banner has generated heat, including name-calling and reactionary outbursts. The discomfort is understandable. For most of the democratic era the Party campaigned inside the ANC, lending it cadres, discipline and ideological ballast without appearing on the ballot itself.

The SACP has not walked out of the Alliance. It contests independently while remaining a member, using the ballot to force the reconfiguration that engagement alone failed to deliver.

But this was never mere habit; the Party's role in the national liberation movement (NLM) has been strategic, aimed at democracy, national liberation and socialism.

Discomfort is not betrayal. The claim that contesting as the SACP betrays the ANC or the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is false. It is peddled mainly by those pursuing their own class interests, and those of the wealthy, landed and political elite comfortable inside the post-1994 settlement, and in its most cynical form by the counter-revolution, which wants the organised working class quiet and off the ballot. We start with the historical record.

A relationship older than the ballot

A communist party standing for office is no novel disloyalty. The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), founded in 1921, contested and won elections long before the ANC governed anything. Cissie Gool sat on the Cape Town City Council in the 1940s, and in 1948 Sam Kahn became South Africa's first Communist MP, using his seat to denounce the incoming apartheid government. Banned in 1950, it re-emerged underground as the SACP in 1953. Apartheid stopped electoral contestation; contesting now is a return to the Party's tradition, not a departure.

The Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu is not a single party with three names. It is a strategic compact between three autonomous organisations sharing the goal of the NDR while retaining their own memberships, programmes and right to act. It never surrendered the Party's independence. Nor is independent contestation a recent whim: the SACP has debated it formally since 2002, and the argument over reconfiguring the Alliance is over two decades old.

The record since 1994

The last three decades read, for workers, as a catalogue of unmet promises. Poverty has deepened for millions, and unemployment is roughly a third on the narrow measure and over four in ten counting discouraged work-seekers, with youth unemployment between 50 and

60%. South Africa remains among the world's most unequal societies, its wealth concentrated along much the same lines as before liberation. The economy has de-industrialised since the 1980s, the 2000s commodity windfall was largely squandered, and violent crime and state-capture corruption hollowed out institutions and looted the poor's resources.

An alliance that stopped functioning for the working class

None of this is the working class's fault, yet it has paid for it. The NDR was meant to bridge political and economic freedom; three decades on, the bridge stands half-built and those promised passage still wait on the near bank. Dealing with this was the ANC's responsibility, but the SACP's

"The last three decades read, for workers, as a catalogue of unmet promises."

and Cosatu's criticisms and proposals were met with stonewalling and often derision.

The Alliance was meant to correct the issues that make the working class capitalism's beasts of burden. For years the SACP and Cosatu pressed for a compact in which the Alliance jointly determines policy and deployment rather than ratifying decisions handed down. The 2019 Alliance Reconfiguration Document was effectively set aside.

The breaking point came after the 2024 elections, when the ANC formed a Government of National Unity with the Democratic Alliance, the home of unbridled capitalism, neo-colonialism, racism and reaction, without meaningfully consulting its partners. To the Party this was no tactical coalition; it treated the working class as a junior partner to be informed rather than a principal to be heard.

The resolution to stand independently matured in this context, adopted at the 15th National

"The SACP has not walked out of the Alliance."

Congress in 2022 and reaffirmed by the Fifth Special National Congress in December 2024. The Party has since registered with the IEC and is fielding thousands of ward candidates in the 2026 local government elections. In 2017 it contested the Metsimaholo by-elections independently and won seats, showing that workers vote for the Party when it asks directly.

The SACP has not walked out of the Alliance. It contests independently while remaining a member, using the ballot to force the reconfiguration that engagement alone failed to deliver. It is managing the contradiction of being a working-class party in an alliance with Black middle-class, petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois forces, ensuring working-class interests, and those of Black workers in particular, are not subsumed in the NDR. Ultimately the working class and ruling class will confront each other directly, perhaps not even on racial terms, and the SACP must prepare, not abandon its mission for appeals from those showing no reciprocal loyalty.

Contesting independently strengthens the movement

The argument critics least want to confront: an independent SACP is good for the broad movement, including the ANC.

Consider who stays home on election day or drifts to the opposition. Many are disillusioned working-class voters, who no longer see themselves reflected in its choices. They are not natural DA voters, nor comfortably absorbed by the populist right; they are the NLM's own people, and no one asks for their vote in a language they recognise. An SACP on the ballot can mobilise them, above all the youth, who have known only the democratic era. A vote won by the SACP is won for the broad democratic movement, not lost to its enemies.

The SACP is, and remains, the ANC's natural ally. Its programme is the movement's own left consciousness. Votes and councillors it wins are far more likely to cooperate with a Congress project than those captured by the DA, the EFF or the MK Party. To treat its candidacy as a threat is to mistake the most reliable ally for an opponent. Candidate lists including community activists and non-members widen the popular front, not shrink it.

Asking the working class to wait is asking it to surrender

"The argument critics least want to confront: an independent SACP is good for the broad movement, including the ANC."

The argument against the SACP contesting is one demand: that the working class indefinitely subordinate its agency to an arrangement that has not delivered. To say the Party must never appear on a ballot in its own name is to say workers' political self-expression must be mediated by others, on others' terms, until a future that never arrives.

Contesting is not a break with the Alliance but an assertion of the independence it never surrendered, the same independence that put Sam Kahn in Parliament and Cissie Gool on the Cape Town Council. It maintains its dialectical relationship with allies while insisting on being counted in its own voice.

That is not betrayal. It is a living movement refusing to let the unfinished business of liberation be filed away, and putting the question of who the democratic project is for back in the hands of those meant to benefit. It is love for the working class made manifest in the only way that counts: working for the working class.

Cde Phillip Dexter, PhD, is a member of the ANC and the SACP and a former General Secretary of Nehawu. He writes in his personal capacity

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Who does the work when the state fails?



People waiting for social grants outside the SASSA office in Eerste River. Archive photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp

Key points

- **State failure** transfers public work onto households, mostly women
- Queuing for water and coping with load-shedding is **unpaid labour**
- Stipend workers are **outside labour protections** despite essential public work
- **Unpaid care remains invisible**, labelled volunteering, participation or love
- We must demand care work be **recognised, redistributed and paid**

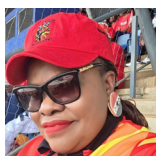
the danger does not go away. Something has to close the gap, and something always does.

State failure is rarely an absence. It is a transfer. Work that should be carried by public institutions, paid for out of public revenue and performed by workers with contracts and rights, is quietly moved onto households. And once it lands in the household, it lands, overwhelmingly, on women.

This is the part of the crisis that does not appear in the auditor-general's reports or the service delivery scorecards. There is no line item for it. But it is the largest subsidy the South African state receives, and it is paid by the poorest women in the country.

The queue is the job

Start with water. In a functioning system, water



THULILE KUMALO

When a municipality stops delivering water, the water does not stop being needed. When a clinic runs out of staff, the sick do not stop being sick. When a police station cannot respond,

arrives through a tap and the labour behind it is performed by employed workers: engineers, plant operators, meter readers, maintenance teams. When the system fails, that labour does not disappear. It is redistributed to the point of use.

Someone now has to know the tanker schedule. Someone has to wait for it, sometimes for hours, sometimes for a tanker that does not come. Someone has to carry twenty-five litres home, ration it across drinking, cooking, washing and sanitation, and manage the conflict that erupts when it runs out before the next delivery. Someone has to boil it when it is unsafe.

That someone has a gender. Walk past any tanker point in a township or informal settlement and count. The queue is women and children. Every hour spent in that queue is an hour not spent in paid work, in school, in study, in rest, in organising. The cost is invisible because nobody bills for it.

The same applies to electricity. Load-shedding does not simply inconvenience a household; it reorganises its labour. Cooking shifts to whenever power is available, often late at night. Food that cannot be refrigerated must be bought in smaller quantities more often, which means more trips, at higher unit cost, on foot. Paraffin and wood have to be fetched and managed, along with the burns and the respiratory illness they bring, which generates more care work downstream.

Feeding people the state does not feed

Food is the clearest case. Where social grants and school feeding do not reach far enough, the gap is filled by community kitchens, soup kitchens, church feeding schemes and neighbours. These are not enterprises. They are women cooking for other people's children out of their own pots, in their own yards, with donated or scraped-together ingredients.

Where the state does show up, it often does so on the cheap. The food handlers who prepare meals under the National School Nutrition Programme are predominantly women working for stipends, not wages. Their labour feeds millions of learners every school day. Without it, the programme does not exist. Yet they are classified in a way that keeps them outside the protections of the Labour

Relations Act as it is normally applied, outside pension provision, outside medical aid, and outside the bargaining councils where real wages are set.

This is the pattern to name clearly: when the state cannot afford to do the work properly, it does not stop doing the work. It reclassifies the worker.

Care as the shock absorber

The health system shows this most sharply. Community health workers carry the primary health care system into homes: tracing defaulters, delivering chronic medication, supporting TB and HIV treatment adherence, monitoring pregnant women, identifying malnutrition. They are overwhelmingly women. They walk. They use their own phones and their own airtime. They are frequently the only contact a household has with the health system at all.

“Load-shedding does not simply inconvenience a household; it reorganises its labour.”

For years this workforce was treated as voluntary, as though the work were a personal virtue rather than a public function. The fight to bring these workers into permanent employment with proper conditions was, and remains, one of the most important gender struggles in the South African labour movement, precisely because it refuses the idea that women's care work is free by nature.

Behind the community health worker stands the unpaid carer. Every patient discharged early because a ward is short of beds goes home to someone. Every person with a disability who cannot access support services is supported by a family member. Every child in a district with no accessible early childhood development centre is minded by a grandmother, an older sister, a neighbour. Time-use data in South Africa and across the region tells the same story everywhere it is collected: women perform roughly double the unpaid care and domestic work that men do, and the gap widens as household income falls and as public services thin out.

Care is the shock absorber of a failing state. It expands silently to take whatever load is placed on it, until the woman absorbing it collapses, and then it expands onto another woman.

Safety without a police station

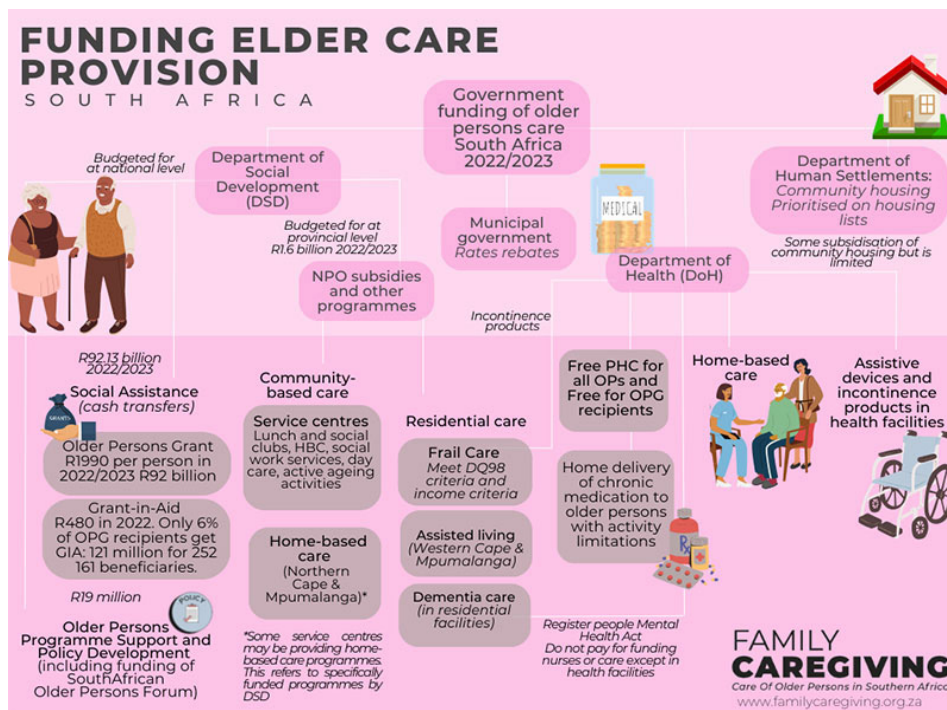
Community safety follows the same logic. Where policing is absent or distrusted, safety becomes a neighbourhood function. Women run the WhatsApp groups that track incidents. Women walk children to school in rotation. Women accompany each other to the taxi rank, to the

Why it stays invisible

This labour remains invisible by design, and the mechanisms are worth naming because they are the things we can actually fight.

It is invisible because it sits outside GDP. Unpaid household and care work is simply not counted as production, so an economy can register growth while households are being stripped.

It is invisible because it is called volunteering. The word converts an employment relationship into a moral gesture, and a stipend into a thank-you.



UCT poster depicting the matrix of elder care. But much of the hard work comes down to unpaid labour by women.

clinic, to the communal toilet after dark. Women staff the shelters, take in the survivor fleeing violence at two in the morning, sit with her at the police station, and keep sitting when the case goes nowhere.

Gender-based violence is where state failure and unpaid labour meet most brutally. The failure of the criminal justice system does not reduce the work of responding to violence. It shifts that work onto the survivor's mother, sister, neighbour and comrade, who perform the functions of investigator, counsellor, social worker and safe house without training, payment, protection or recourse. And they do it while carrying the same water, cooking the same food and minding the same children.

What the movement should demand

If the diagnosis is a transfer of labour, the response cannot only be a demand for better services in the abstract. It has to be a demand that the work be recognised, redistributed and paid.

That means treating the care economy as economic infrastructure, on the same footing as roads and ports, with budget allocations to match.

It means the full formalisation of the stipend workforce, community health workers, Early Childhood Development practitioners, food handlers, home-based carers, into permanent public employment with wages, benefits and

bargaining rights.

women workers sit at the table rather than being informed of the outcome.

It means compulsory time-use measurement, so that the hours women lose to a failed water system appear somewhere in the national accounts and can be argued about politically.

It means service delivery standards written with the carrying and the queuing in mind, because the distance to a standpipe is a labour question.

And it means that where transition planning is happening, in energy, in health, in local government,

“Women’s care work is naturalised as an expression of maternal or wifely devotion rather than recognised as labour.”

The question is not whether the work gets done when the state fails. It gets done. The question is who is made to do it, on whose time, at whose expense, and for how long we are going to keep pretending that this arrangement is free.

Cde Thulile Kumalo is the National Gender Coordinator for the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union. She writes in her personal capacity

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS – POLITICAL EDUCATION

Chommy-na-Chommy cartoon strips – a fresh way to spread the message



In a nutshell – why young people should vote SACP. Chommy na Chommy comic strip.

Key points

- Cartoon strips make **Marxism accessible** beyond difficult textbooks
- Political education **builds class consciousness**, not just knowledge of history
- **Left and right vastly different** in responding to workers' material conditions
- Political education **teaches workers to analyse** news, not simply absorb it



TSHOLOFELO MASEKO

Local government election season in South Africa means that a lot of service delivery will be done on time, and political parties will be publicly leaking information that seeks to discredit their counterparts. With so much information, our people then fall into the trap of using the media as the only tool of analysis to make a proper decision on which political party they need to support.

Developing political education is critically important. This is why the Chommy-na-Chommy campaign came out with cartoon strips to give people a colourful background on the importance of political education.

We use the very same tool that other organisations use more positively, taking Marxism out of difficult textbooks, transforming it into a language our people can easily understand.

Political education is not about knowing history alone. It is also about developing class consciousness, helping working-class people understand their position within this capitalist society, to educate people in different ways what the cause of our current material conditions is.

Political education for the nation

In China, political education programmes have

been integrated into the school curricula for students as young as seven. The curricula combine Marxist principles with traditional values and emphasise Chinese civilisation achievements, the Communist Party of China's role in tackling poverty, pandemic response and rejuvenation. This feeds young people with enough information to reason differently, and it also has a very significant role in their professional success.

Political education transforms the workers from people who merely experience exploitation into people who understand its causes, recognise their class interests and the importance of a collective organisation to change society.

The absence of political education becomes visible when leaders approach working-class social problems as administrative inconvenience to be removed rather than contradictions whose material causes must be understood and transformed.

Material root-causes

The differences between left-wing and right-wing politics are not simply found in the logos but in the response to the material conditions of working-class people.

With right-wing parties the closing down of shops like Shoprite, KFC and more is considered good and for people who live in RDP house to pay rent feels like they have accomplished something great, while our very own working-class people applaud without questioning how these actions will have an impact on them.

All of these discrepancies are caused by the lack of political education. In a country where we have 33,6% unemployment rate, the closing down of shops means we are increasing the unemployment rate, thus causing more crisis.

With a left-wing party the first step would be firstly to acknowledge that rent and municipal obligations must be paid, but question whether the

"Political education transforms the workers from people who merely experience exploitation into people who understand its causes..."

*“...taking Marxism
out of difficult textbooks,
transforming it into a
language our people can
easily understand.”*

closing a business should be the first response when closure can also mean workers losing their livelihoods.

Battling bourgeois propaganda

A right-wing response to certain situations will emphasise property rights, individual responsibility, payment compliance and

enforcement, while a socialist response asks how unemployment, ownership, wages, municipal pricing and class inequality created the problem, and will then seek collective solutions that protect both public resources and working-class livelihoods.

Political education is important because a majority of our people depend solely on the news or radio stations to understand what is happening around them. Political education not only shapes how we think, but it also makes us take the information we are being given and learn to analyse it and connect it to our realities.

Cde Tsholofelo Maseko is the YCLSA District Head of Secretariat in Tshwane

YOUNG REDS

Why should anyone join the YCL today?



YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE
OF SOUTH AFRICA

**RED OCTOBER
CAMPAIGN 2026-27**
BUILDING PEOPLE'S POWER WHERE WE LIVE

RED DAYS, REAL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

**PERIOD PAIN IS REAL.
WORKPLACE DIGNITY MUST BE REAL TOO.**

When period pain makes work or study especially difficult, no woman should be forced to choose between her health and her wages, education or dignity.



Protected menstrual
leave on request



No penalty. No stigma.



Free menstrual products
in schools, campuses and
public institutions



Accessible diagnosis
and treatment



Clean, safe and private
sanitation facilities



**Stop telling women to push
through pain that should
be treated.**

**A PEOPLE THAT LEARNS
A PEOPLE THAT WINS!**

X VOTE IN 2026
SACP



Every story
is unique,
every journey
matters.

Key points

- **Rebuild first** – structures, 52 districts, regular leadership meetings
- **Restore constitutional discipline** – including youth age limits
- **Reach young people** through culture, sport, writing clubs, political education
- **Organise around** interns, graduate unemployment and livelihoods
- **Practical hope** – create cooperatives that deliver more than promises

The first National Secretary of the re-established YCLSA meets the current incumbent. Cde Buti Manamela talks to Cde Jan Oupa Nabane about rebuilding the League, appealing to a new generation, and providing young people with practical reasons to organise.



BUTI MANAMELA

On the opening day of Cosatu's Congress, a pause in plenary gives us time to talk. A matter arising from the credentials discussion has been referred to a special Central Committee meeting. Cde Jan Oupa Nabane and I leave the hall and head to the dining area.

Cde Nabane, 30, is the YCLSA's Interim National Secretary. With us is the League's spokesperson, Cde Thabile Lenkwane, and another former National Secretary. The conversation moves between generations, but its central concern belongs to the young man now responsible for rebuilding the organisation.

I was the first National Secretary of the YCLSA after its re-establishment in 2003. Sitting with Cde Nabane, I recognise some of the difficulties he describes: scarce resources, organisational expectations and the need to turn political commitment into functioning branches. But recognition is not the same as an answer. He is organising a different generation.

Cde Nabane says the League still benefits from systems built by its predecessors. Those foundations have helped hold it together. Yet its administrative capacity has weakened, financial

support is scarce, and programmes cannot be implemented simply because the leadership has agreed to them.

I recall the description of our early office as one man and a fax machine. He recognises the comparison immediately. We are talking about an organisational reset.

His immediate priorities are to rebuild structures, maintain the League's 52 districts and restore an understanding of how the organisation should function at every level. Preparing for national congress matters, but he does not want the leadership consumed by the meeting while neglecting the organisation that must reach it.

"We need to get structures back," he says.

That means confronting habits within the leadership itself. Nabane insists on regular collective meetings, with comrades knowing the work being undertaken, the difficulties confronting the League and the positions communicated in its name.

"You need to know what I'm going to say to young people."

He wants constitutional discipline restored, including respect for the age limits of a youth organisation. Older comrades cannot hold onto its leadership indefinitely. The question, as he puts it, concerns the changing interests and circumstances of people at different stages of life.

"We need to get structures back."

Political education and culture

But a functioning office and properly constituted structures do not settle the question I put to him: why should anybody join the YCL today?

"I like the question," he replies.

His answer begins with young people's interests. Political and ideological education remains essential, but the League cannot confine itself to explaining society while leaving young people

to confront their material difficulties alone. Its relevance has to be demonstrated through the issues around which it organises.

A recent programme at the State Theatre offers an indication of what he has in mind. The League launched the Eddie Roux Political School alongside the Ruth First Brigades, bringing political education into a setting also shaped by cultural performance.

I ask whether it was another gathering of speeches. There was poetry and performance, he explains. A planned drama on political participation could not go ahead because the finances were insufficient. Nevertheless, he believes the programme demonstrated a different way of reaching young people who would not necessarily attend a conventional political meeting.

Cde Nabane describes a wider problem of disengagement from organised politics, affecting the YCL and other youth formations. Repeating familiar meeting formats will not, by itself, bring those young people back.

He wants writing clubs, political study and training that helps cadres communicate. Speaking and writing cannot be treated as abilities that arrive automatically with membership.

"We want to revive the writing club," he says.

Sport, cultural activity and camps also enter the discussion. The intention is to create spaces where young people can participate, form relationships and encounter political ideas beyond the usual hall and platform.

He is equally concerned about the example leaders set. Young people look for people who inspire them, including through education and what they do with their own lives.

"They want to have someone who can at least give them hope, practical hope."

What would that mean in a programme of struggle?

Outreach and mobilisation

Nabane raises the position of interns. Young people perform productive work, he argues, but their stipends remain fixed while other workers' remuneration is adjusted. He wants the League to organise around their treatment rather than regard an internship as sufficient simply because it offers some experience.

Our discussion turns to work-integrated learning, subsequent internships and the frustration of graduates who remain without work. He wants closer attention to how qualifications become opportunities to earn a living.

For a technically trained young person, he asks, what would make it possible to use those skills productively rather than wait indefinitely for a vacancy? His concern is with the support needed to make self-reliance practical.

"They want to have someone who can at least give them hope, practical hope."

I put a further difficulty to him. Our early organising concentrated on campuses, then on township and rural branches. Those choices reflected where

young people could be reached and the issues around which they could be mobilised.

But the organisation must also understand changes in work: deindustrialisation, the gig economy and employment conducted remotely across borders. Where should the YCL concentrate its efforts now?

Nabane does not pretend that every answer has been settled. He and Lenkwane have been discussing the need for research to connect their organising ideas with young people's circumstances and existing programmes.

"We need to conduct the research."

Hands-on approach

There is, however, an area where his answers become particularly detailed: the People's Red Caravan.

He explains that he studied agriculture and undertook training in smart agriculture in China. Our conversation moves from political organisation to poultry records, cooperative management and the arrangements needed to get produce to market.

“...create spaces where young people can participate, form relationships and encounter political ideas...”

He shows me reporting templates used in the Caravan’s agricultural work. They record poultry health and mortality, including suspected causes of deaths. He explains the weekly reporting, training in financial management and the work of helping communities understand cooperative governance.

This is not separate from his argument about the League. It gives substance to what he means by practical involvement. Skills have to be applied, production organised and responsibilities followed through after an activation ends.

Nor does he describe every activity as a job created. Some participants receive food without yet receiving wages. That distinction matters when assessing what the projects have achieved.

He discusses unemployed graduates contributing their skills, household producers combining produce for sale, and the difficulties of getting cooperative structures to work consistently. These experiences inform his thinking about the kind of organisation the YCL should become.

Youth perspective

As elections approach, he wants the League to contribute a youth perspective to the Party’s campaigns and to its longer-term direction. That requires more than discussing who should occupy leadership positions. What does the YCL believe about the future of the Party? What contribution should it make?

The conversation leaves those questions open for further work. Nabane has priorities, some practical experience and an organisation whose capacity he knows must improve.

For the first National Secretary of the re-established League, there is a temptation to answer today’s difficulties with yesterday’s experience. But the responsibility now belongs to his generation. Cde Nabane’s task is to give young people a reason to join, and work worth staying for. His phrase remains the most useful measure: practical hope.

Cde Buti Manamela is the editor of Umsebenzi Online, a member of the SACP Central Committee and the former organiser for the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers’ Union

YOUNG REDS – POLITICAL EDUCATION

Building youth power for socialism – launch of the Eddie Roux Political School



YCLSA Spokesperson Thabile Lenkwane (left) and the League's National Treasurer Tarik Lalla at the launch of the Eddie Roux Political School. Photo YCLSA

Key points

- YCLSA Eddie Roux Political School marks a **new effort to develop political education**
- **Eddie Roux's legacy** as a communist, journalist and academic inspires the school
- **Curriculum** covers philosophy, political economy, state power and organisational development
- **Tiered study circles and train-the-trainer model** carry education into branches
- **Success depends** on sustained study and practical organisational development among young cadres

"Socialism in Our Lifetime: Building Youth Power for Socialism!"



EXLIRA GIOSE-DAVIDS

The development of politically conscious, ideologically grounded, and organisationally capable young people has long been a key feature of the South African communist tradition.

It is within this tradition that the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA) has established the **Eddie Roux Political School and Ideological Training Programme**,

a structured initiative aimed at strengthening political education and cadre development within the organisation.

The school was launched on 10 September 2026 at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane under the leadership of School Principal Comrade Donald Mthoa and the leadership structures of the YCLSA. The school is seeking to establish a systematic approach to political education across the organisation, based on the strategic tasks identified by the National Interim Leadership Committee (NILC).

Inspiration

The choice of Cde Eddie Roux as the school's namesake has particular historical significance. Born in 1903, Roux became involved in communist politics while still a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. He was one of the founding members of the Young Communist League (YCL) in the early 1920s, later joining the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). He served as editor of Umsebenzi, the Party's weekly publication at the time.

Roux's contribution was not confined to political organisation and education. He went on to become a distinguished botanist and academic, completing his doctorate at Cambridge University and eventually becoming a professor of botany at the University of the Witwatersrand. He also wrote extensively on South African political history, including *Time Longer Than Rope* (1948, republished in 1966), a detailed historical account of the struggle against racial oppression. In 1964 he was subject to banning orders by the apartheid regime, prohibiting him from teaching, publishing, attending gatherings, being quoted, or leaving Johannesburg. He died in 1966.

His early political work is particularly relevant to the idea of a political school. Historical accounts record Roux's involvement in debates about the organisation of black workers and the development of a non-racial working-class movement during the formative years of the communist movement

in South Africa. The YCL itself played an important role in political education and anti-militarist activity during the 1920s.

Prioritising political education

The Eddie Roux Political School therefore places political education at the centre of organisational development. Its underlying approach is that ideological education should not be separated from practical organisational work. Rather, political theory is intended to provide cadres with tools through which they can understand their social and economic environment, analyse political developments and participate more effectively in organisational and community work.

"...ideological education should not be separated from practical organisational work."

The curriculum is organised around four broad areas. The first is **philosophy and ideology**, covering questions such as materialism and idealism, metaphysics and dialectics, as well as dialectical and historical materialism.

The second is **political economy**, including the development of capitalism, neocolonialism, international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Brics and the economic history of South Africa. Contemporary political developments, including the Government of National Unity (GNU) and Government of Provincial Unity (GPU), also form part of the programme.

The third area focuses on the **state, power and revolution**, including different approaches to state power and selected international experiences such as Zimbabwe, Chile and Venezuela.

The fourth focuses on organisational development, covering practical administration, leadership, discipline, meeting procedures, reporting and other skills required for effective organisational functioning.

An important feature of the programme is its emphasis on making political education accessible beyond specialist political language. Training manuals aim to provide structured material for



and logistical support.

In this respect, the launch of the Eddie Roux Political School represents more than the introduction of a new training programme. It establishes an organisational framework through which political education can be carried from national structures into branches, districts and provinces. Its success will ultimately depend on whether this framework can translate into sustained study, discussion and practical organisational development among young cadres.

Critical praxis

So the Eddie Roux Political School looks both backwards and forwards: backwards to a history when political education was seen as a crucial part of practical political organisation, or praxis (the combination of theory and practice); and forwards to the task of developing a new generation of

cadres at different levels, while political education is organised through a tiered system of branch study circles, monthly educational sessions, quarterly district schools and bi-annual provincial schools.

Training trainers

The programme also incorporates a train-the-trainer model, including the proposed “One Trainer — One District” approach. This is intended to expand the number of cadres able to facilitate political education within their own structures rather than concentrating educational capacity at national level.

The school’s programme also provides opportunities for cooperation with organisations and institutions within the broader progressive movement. These include the SACP, trade unions such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (Nehawu), as well as institutions such as the Chris Hani Institute (CHI), the Dora Tamana Cooperative Agency (DTCA), PAT (Pan Africa Today) and the Nkrumah International School, and the NUM’s Elijah Barayi Political Brigades, amongst other key partners. The proposed areas of cooperation include seminars, guest lectures, curriculum development, educational resources

“An important feature of the programme is its emphasis on making political education accessible beyond specialist political language.”

young people capable of engaging critically with South Africa’s political, economic and social questions.

Following its launch at the South African State Theatre, the school has transitioned from a strategic proposal to an institutional programme. The next phase will see it implemented across the structures of the YCLSA, with the establishment of study circles, the development of trainers, the production of educational material, and the creation of spaces in which young people can engage seriously with political theory, political economy, organisational practice, and the history of the South African liberation movement.

By doing this, the Eddie Roux Political School is putting political education at the heart of the YCLSA’s efforts to develop a more informed and capable generation of young leaders, continuing a tradition of political learning that has been part of South Africa’s working-class and communist history for over a century.

Cde Exlira Giose is a member of the YCLSA National Interim Leadership Core

YOUNG REDS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Young Reds rally support for SACP



The YCLSA commits itself to fight for the right to work, hold government and businesses accountable for youth unemployment and build younger worker organisation and collective power. Photo: Inside Politics/ Eddie Mtsweni

Key points

- YCLSA is **campaigning for the SACP** ahead of 4 November
- The **Youth Manifesto** sets out 10 fronts, with jobs as the priority
- Ruth First Red Brigades are **permanent structures for cadre development**
- Ruth First Games use **sport for political education and recruitment**
- A **weekly campaign calendar** runs from September to November

Power Where We Live!" and urging youth to vote SACP.

The YCLSA's support is not just routine organisational loyalty. It reflects a youth-focused mobilisation around the idea that local government is where everyday struggles over services, housing, and jobs can be directly addressed through a socialist programme.

Guided by the Youth Fronts and drawing primarily from the SACP election manifesto, the YCLSA will produce a youth election manifesto. The document will translate the Party electoral programme into a language and demands that speak to the working-class Youth.

The Youth Manifesto's 10 fronts for a socialist future

1. **Jobs:** decent and sustainable work for young people.
2. **National youth service:** for community development and a caring society.



LEBOGANG PULE

The YCLSA has been actively campaigning for the SACP in the run-up to the 4 November 2026 municipal elections. The League is framing its support in terms of building working-class power at local level, mobilising young cadres under the slogan "Build People's

3. **Education:** quality, free and accessible education from early learning to university
4. **Social cohesion:** Unity, non-racialism and a society free from all forms of discrimination.
5. **Youth enterprises and cooperatives:** Collective ownership for shared prosperity
6. **Mentorship and skills development:** learning from each other, building our future.
7. **Health and wellbeing:** A healthy youth for a stronger movement.
8. **Environment:** Climate justice for current and future generations.
9. **Infrastructure and ICT:** Connect communities, bridge the digital divide
10. **Sport and recreation:** Healthy, active and disciplined communities.

The most important front is jobs for young people, decent and sustainable work

for a just South Africa – our demands as youth include massive expansion of decent, sustainable job opportunities for young people, an end to exploitative and unpaid work – including abusive

internships – and implementation of genuine national youth services as part of a job creation strategy. The YCLSA commits itself to fight for the right to work, hold government and businesses accountable for youth unemployment and build younger worker organisation and collective power.

The launch of the Ruth First Red Brigade - investigate! organise! educate! act!

The Ruth First Red Brigade serves as a site of cadre development and political formation, which took place on 10 September 2026, at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane, and was addressed by the Interim National Secretary Cde Jan Nabane. The launch was named after the revolutionary communist, journalist and former YCLSA National Secretary, Cde Ruth First, as she dedicated her life to the struggle for a free South Africa.

The brigades are not a temporary electoral structure, but they intend to become a permanent feature of YCLSA organisational structures.

On the other hand, on 20 September 2026, Dr Yusuf Dadoo District launched its Provincial Manifesto

of Ruth First Brigades in Gauteng, and provincial committees will launch the brigades across all nine provinces as part of the YCLSA build-up activities to the Local Government Elections.

Further, the Ruth First games will be held on designated Saturdays, with political education, voter registration and membership recruitment. They are sport-based community activations that use football, netball and other sports to engage young people. The launch of the National Ruth First games will be in Mpumalanga Province, followed by the other eight provinces.”

As part of the Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign, the YCLSA urges learners from working-class backgrounds to apply for NSFAS and institutions of higher learning on time. Young people should not lose opportunities simply because they missed an application deadline. As the Joe Slovo campaign

advocates, education is a right, not a privilege.

The YCLSA has developed a weekly campaign calendar from September to November 2026:

- Monday: Know and Act in Your

Neighbourhood

- Tuesday: Campus and residence visits
- Wednesday: Qina Msebenzi, focusing on industrial workers
- Thursday: National Bua Thursday
- Fridays: YCLSA Social Activities
- Saturday: Ruth First Games
- Sunday: Church visits
- In addition, we will conduct campus visits, rural youth engagement drives and coordination with the SACP on all aspects of the electoral campaign.

LET US MOBILISE THE YOUTH, LET US BUILD PEOPLE POWER, LET US RESCUE THE NDR.

A united fighting, working-class youth can change South Africa.

Forward to working-class power! Vote SACP! Vote socialism!

Cde Lebogang Pule is a member of the YCLSA National Interim Leadership Core and YCLSA National Elections Convenor. She writes in her personal capacity

YOUNG REDS – YOUTH MANIFESTO

Ten fronts, one struggle – what must be built on the road to socialism?



YOUTH MANIFESTO

10 FRONTS FOR A SOCIALIST YOUTH FUTURE

**ORGANISE
STUDY
MOBILISE
ADVANCE**

1



JOBS

Decent and sustainable work for young people.

6



MENTORSHIP AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Learning from each other, building our future.

2



NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

For community development and a caring society.

7



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A healthy youth for a stronger movement.

3



EDUCATION

Quality, free and accessible education from early learning to university.

8



ENVIRONMENT

Climate justice for current and future generations.

4



SOCIAL COHESION

Unity, non-racialism and a society free from all forms of discrimination.

9



INFRASTRUCTURE AND ICT

Connect communities, bridge the digital divide.

5



YOUTH ENTERPRISES AND CO-OPERATIVES

Collective ownership for shared prosperity.

10



SPORT AND RECREATION

Healthy, active and disciplined communities.

VOTE  **SACP**

**SOCIALISM
IN OUR
LIFETIME**

Key points

- Youth unemployment is a structural failure, with costs absorbed by working-class households.
- Jobs require industrial investment, not just skills training or “work-readiness.”
- National Youth Service and co-operatives must build lasting capacity, not temporary holding spaces.
- No front is self-explanatory; socialist content comes through practice.
- Success means more organisation, collective provision, ownership and working-class economic power.



THABILE LENKWANE

For a generation of working-class young people, adulthood increasingly begins with waiting: for a place at a university or TVET college, for NSFAS, for an internship, for an interview, for a short-term programme, and, when that ends, waiting again.

Behind this waiting are households already stretching wages, pensions and grants across more people than those incomes were meant to sustain. There are qualifications without employment, communities in need of work while millions remain unemployed, and young people told to become more employable in an economy that is not creating enough jobs.

Against this reality, the YCLSA *Youth Manifesto* identifies ten fronts of struggle. Because the YCLSA places them on the road towards socialism, they deserve more than celebration. They require interrogation. Jobs, education, health, co-operatives, infrastructure, ICT, environmental justice, social cohesion, mentorship and recreation plainly respond to real needs. The harder question is what struggle on these fronts must change if it is to carry a socialist content.

A crisis beyond statistics

In the second quarter of 2026, five million South Africans aged 15 to 34 were unemployed, while only 5.6 million were employed. Youth unemployment

had risen to 47.4%. These figures say something about the economy itself: it can reproduce wealth while leaving a substantial part of the next generation outside productive employment.

Unemployed young people do not exist outside the economy. Their survival is supported by workers whose wages sustain an unemployed sibling, by grandmothers whose pensions feed another adult, by women performing unpaid care work, and by public services that inadequately substitute for what households cannot buy. In 2025, 50.6% of households contained at least one social grant recipient, 22% reported inadequate or severely inadequate access to food, and just 15.5% of individuals had medical aid.

Youth unemployment therefore cannot be reduced to the unemployed individual. Its costs are socialised within working-class households, while the decisions that shape investment and production remain concentrated elsewhere. This is where class analysis changes how the YCLSA's ten fronts are read.

Labour can't employ itself

A jobs front cannot end with making young people “work-ready”. Skills and preparation matter, but five million unemployed young people cannot rewrite their CVs into five million jobs. The discussion has to leave the interview room and enter the economy. What is South Africa producing? Which industries are expanding? Where is investment going? Why is socially necessary work left undone while labour goes unused? Who decides how productive resources are allocated?

Once these questions are posed, jobs cannot be separated from education, infrastructure, industrialisation or ownership. TVET colleges can train artisans, but those skills need construction programmes, rail, energy systems and manufacturing to be used. Universities can produce engineers, but engineering acquires social meaning only when there is infrastructure to design, build and maintain. The contradiction is not merely a “skills mismatch” but a mismatch between human capacities and the productive structure available to absorb them.

Work that needs doing

National Youth Service approaches the contradiction from another direction. There is enormous work to be done in maintaining infrastructure, supporting schools, providing care, rehabilitating the environment and strengthening communities, while millions need work. If socially necessary labour exists while paid employment does not, why must the organisation of work depend so heavily on whether it yields an immediate private return?

“Unemployed young people do not exist outside the economy.”

Yet there is a danger here too: the National Youth Service could become another holding space in which the unemployed circulate through temporary programmes before returning to unemployment. The SACP’s 2022 Congress declaration argued for expanding public employment beyond temporary interventions towards ongoing work that maintains communities and responds to crises of social reproduction. One approach manages unemployment; the other asks whether society can consciously organise labour around social need.

Co-operatives, not hustle

The enterprise and co-operative front presents a similar choice. Entrepreneurship can become the language through which structural unemployment is individualised: if the market cannot absorb you, create your own job. But enthusiasm alone does not make an enterprise. Capital, equipment, land, electricity, customers, technology, procurement and market access determine whether it survives.

Co-operatives introduce a different principle, collective rather than individual ownership. But the word itself is not transformative, and a co-operative without productive assets or markets can fail as quickly as any small business.

The strategic question is whether developmental finance, procurement and productive resources can build durable collective economic capacity

rather than another layer of projects permanently dependent on grants.

Ten-front struggle

This brings the manifesto closer to the SACP’s own strategic argument. Its programme rejects treating the national-democratic and socialist struggles as two sealed stages, arguing instead for transformative advances now, built on working-class and popular power in key sites of decision-making.

More recently, the SACP has linked this to reindustrialisation, strategic public ownership, infrastructure investment, productive co-operatives, developmental finance and worker participation in economic decisions.

If that is the strategic horizon, the ten fronts cannot simply become ten programmes delivered to young people. They must ask what is being built through the struggle itself.

Fighting commodification

This applies equally to the fronts that seem less “economic”. Healthcare, transport, connectivity and recreation all enter directly into the reproduction of working-class life. When healthcare is public, less of a worker’s income is surrendered to the market simply to stay healthy. When transport is affordable, wages are not consumed by the journey to work. When broadband is accessible social infrastructure, participation in education and the economy depends less on household purchasing power. When communities have libraries, sports

“...class analysis changes how the YCLSA’s ten fronts are read.”

grounds and safe recreational spaces, social development is not reserved for those who can buy it. These are struggles over commodification: how much of human life must be bought and sold, and how much society provides collectively.

No front is politically self-explanatory

Here the manifesto must resist becoming a familiar catalogue of youth development. Mentorship can help individuals climb existing hierarchies without questioning them. Skills programmes can endlessly prepare young people for jobs that are not being created.

Entrepreneurship can glorify individual hustle. Social cohesion can become dialogue about tolerance while material inequality fuels competition over scarce jobs, housing and services. Even environmental programmes can become symbolic unless they ask who owns emerging industries, who gets the new jobs and who bears the costs of restructuring.

The problem is not that these are the wrong fronts, but that no front is politically self-explanatory. Their socialist content must be produced through practice, by linking immediate gains to deeper changes in productive capacity, collective provision, ownership, organisation and power.

Where interests collide

That may be the best way to understand what it means to call them *fronts*. A front is not simply an issue; it is a place where contending social interests meet. Jobs confront decisions about investment and production. Education raises the question of whose development the skills system serves. Co-operatives raise ownership. Infrastructure raises control over social investment. Healthcare raises the boundary between need and commodity. Environmental justice raises the ownership and direction of the transition itself. The manifesto is strongest not when the ten fronts remain separate campaigns, but when they reveal the same class contradiction from different directions.

"...a co-operative without productive assets or markets can fail as quickly as any small business."

A demanding test

This sets a harder test for the YCLSA. The measure cannot only be how many young people are trained, placed, mentored or enrolled. It must ask what

remains afterwards:

- *Is there greater productive capacity?*
- *Are young people more organised?*
- *Have collective institutions become stronger?*
- *Has public provision expanded?*
- *Have new forms of ownership been established?*
- *Has the power to make economic decisions shifted at all?*

Road-building

Immediate victories matter, because people cannot live on the promise of a future society. But if socialism is the destination, the journey cannot consist only of making deprivation slightly easier to survive. The road has to accumulate something: organisation where there is fragmentation; productive capacity where there is unemployment; collective provision where basic needs have been commodified; social ownership where productive resources are concentrated; and working-class power where economic decisions remain beyond the reach of those whose lives they affect.

That is the challenge contained in the ten fronts: not merely whether they can improve young people's conditions now, but whether struggle on them can begin changing the relations that continuously reproduce those conditions. If they can, the fronts become more than demands made on the road to socialism.

They become part of the material work of constructing that road itself.

Thabile Lenkwane is the National Spokesperson of the YCLSA

"Immediate victories matter, because people cannot live on the promise of a future society."

Tupac Shakur: 30 years on – lessons from genuine revolutionaries



Key points

- Tupac was a YCL USA member, a fact often overlooked
- The theory of revolution must be updated for contemporary contradictions
- Tupac's bid to unite rival coasts shows accountable, unconventional action
- Revolutionaries can build careers while organising in their communities



LESEGO MASISI

On 13 September 1996, the world mourned Tupac Amaru Shakur, a hip-hop pioneer who infused his lyrics, poetry, interviews and films with a spirit of revolution and deep political consciousness in just over five years.

How could one person generate an impact still felt worldwide, at such a young age and in such a short time?

Born Lesane Parish Crooks on 16 June 1971, exactly five years before the 1976 Soweto Uprising, Tupac coincidentally embodied the same youthful revolutionary energy that advanced the South African liberation struggle to heights matched only by the wars against colonial dispossession and the sabotage operations of the early 1960s.

In the late 1980s, Shakur became a card-carrying member of the Young Communist League of the USA in Baltimore, Maryland, becoming directly involved with the organisation. This fact is often overlooked or dismissed as inconsequential when people reflect on his legacy worldwide, which can only be regarded as a deliberate distortion of his comprehensive impact on the revolutionary struggle by limiting it to his music and entrepreneurial energy.

In the late 1980s, Shakur became a card-carrying member of the Young Communist League of the USA in Baltimore, Maryland, becoming directly involved with the organisation. Photo: Ron Galella/WireImage

Today, millions of young people pay homage to him by wearing clothing bearing his name, yet do not reproduce his commitment to struggle for total liberation. Many are unaware of his positions on decolonialism, class struggle, revolution and liberation, all integrated with genuine personal growth.

As a young society, we should draw three lessons from the legacy of Tupac and his kin to craft a future we would enjoy living in.

Lesson 1: We are of revolutionary-bearing capacity, as young as we are

Throughout the 20th century, most historical developments in the socioeconomic and political landscape were instigated by people aged 25 to 35. Take the ANC Youth League, founded in 1944 to organise the liberation movement as a political unit, shying away from the antiquated processes of a mother body led by elderly liberal elitists who preferred a civil-rights organisation begging for a seat at the table.

“As a young society, we should draw three lessons from the legacy of Tupac...”

Mandela, Lembede, Sobukwe and Sisulu were all in this age group. Without their stubborn confidence in crafting the reality they wished to live in, I doubt the ANC would have survived apartheid. They did not wait to be chosen.

A quarter-century later, a younger generation, including Chris Hani, raised critical problems with how the struggle was conducted after the Rivonia arrests, and was expelled from the ANC for it. Had they chosen caution over being branded traitors, I doubt the ANC would have survived into 1994. Luckily, a mature leadership appreciated the gravity of their concerns and recommitted itself to developing a revolutionary theory of struggle, now known as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

Post-apartheid, an ANCYL generation, again aged 25 to 35, identified weak points in the Alliance’s programme within a constitutional democratic

framework. They shifted from lobbying for future heads of state to challenging the failure of ANC-led policies to remodel the economy in line with the NDR. Owing to a lack of strategic foresight and compassion, they were expelled without genuine reconsideration, marking the start of the Alliance’s most significant fragmentation.

One golden thread runs through these moments: young people exercising agency beyond traditional organisational conduct. Rather than petitioning to become future leaders at conferences and seminars, today’s youth should not shy away from the unfinished work left by contemporary leaders, even if it costs them political standing.

This is the energy Tupac expressed in lyric and verse. Young people should craft the future they want without waiting for permission; if organisational methods, including constitutional guidelines, no longer serve the NDR, they must be changed regardless of consequence.

Lesson 2: Creative and unconventional methods of engagement

Young people are historically allergic to established convention, and every society’s fate depends on how this conduct is honed, guided and coordinated. Movements transformed by the young should not be surprised by their electoral performance when young intellectual contributions are undervalued; they should fear for the future of the organisations they claim to love.

This intellectual de-linking has stalled the development of the NDR’s content. A theory of revolution is not a finished product; it must be regularly updated to reflect contemporary contradictions, or it will find no practical relevance in State policy-making. Yet intellectuals were largely sidelined by internal political processes, entrenching a culture of mediocrity chosen for its social appeal. The most robust guideline for a post-apartheid South Africa therefore remains Joe Slovo’s 1988 discussion document.

History shows that revolutions are neither sustained solely by intellectuals nor led solely by gifted organisers; they draw on a balanced mix of individuals from all class positions. Tensions and factions are inevitable, as people gravitate to those

they are comfortable with. However, factions today prioritise friendship and unity over the quality of revolutionary struggle, leading to disunity of purpose.

“Young people should craft the future they want without waiting for permission...”

One of Tupac’s most underrated legacies was his attempt to unite the East and West coasts of the United States in music through the launch of Death Row East in mid-1996, after bitter division through gang violence. He may have deepened the tension through some of his lyrics, but he took genuine accountability and remedial action. He did not wait to be told to unite the communities.

Lesson 3: Consequences of being impact-driven within the struggle

Those bitten by the bug of revolution develop a deep hypersensitivity to injustice. The same unjust systems radicalised Assata Shakur, Tupac’s godmother, Afeni Shakur, his mother, as well as Chris Hani, Steve Biko and Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the independent DRC, who was deposed and assassinated.

Fidel Castro survived more than 600 assassination attempts. Chris Hani survived multiple attempts, including a car bomb and a house bomb planted by the apartheid regime in the early 1980s, only to be shot by a Polish right-wing extremist in his Boksburg driveway in 1993. This exposes a dangerous pattern: are young people truly genuine about dying for a liberatory cause if the only option remaining is to become a conformist?

The liberation struggle prioritised political victory as the means to dismantle social relations of power through a constitutionally guided democracy, but this now seems a farce, because the influence of key economic players makes compromise seem the only pragmatic route.

Those named above knew the personal risks of fighting a historical injustice rooted in colonial hegemony. That injustice endures when young people and leaders become

conformists who barely rattle the foundations of this system of colonial violence, in exchange for weak political careers.

People can still have solid, growing careers, particularly in corporate spaces, while engaging in real revolutionary activity in their communities, sectors and organisations. The contrary belief is designed to starve organised politics of a stronger intelligentsia, well-versed in both theory and practice. Tupac, who grew in the entertainment industry while integrating revolutionary activity into his acting and music, is a prime example. This blueprint should be recommended to all young people committed to South Africa’s potential.

As we mark 30 years since Tupac’s death, 30 years of our constitution and 50 years since the 1976 Uprisings, we should reflect on what impact we are really contributing to the spaces we participate in, and whether it will be recognised decades from now for breaking creative stagnation. If our reflections disappoint, we must begin developing a culture of critique against established patterns in these spaces.

Cde Lesego Masisi is a co-founder and former National Executive Council member of the South African Chapter of the Anti-Apartheid Movement for Palestine, and a member of the SACP, having formerly served in the YCLSA Greater Tshwane District Committee. He writes in his personal capacity.

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