

47 years later and the struggle continues

 By [Carl Willoughby](#)

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Rewind to 1976, the year I was born. A different reality. A violently volatile one with a vastly different political climate to the one we face today, yet the similarities are uncanny.



Carl Willoughby, chief creative officer at Hunt Lascaris, says we can all do more to assist young people in the country

The Apartheid regime made very deliberate decisions to rob disadvantaged black students of proper education.

By implementing a curriculum focused on Afrikaner culture and language, they sought to limit critical thinking, instill a sense of inferiority and maintain social and political control over the majority black population.

There were so many other atrocities that I'd learn to deal with and accept but as I grew older things eased and with that, I gained access to more opportunities and a different way of being.

I was fortunate.

Not perfect but help make a difference

Today we celebrate and embrace our diversity.

There were very different deliberate decisions made to help the black majority population prosper.

A population inclusive of various previously disadvantaged communities. The abolishment of apartheid and the introduction of BBBee policies mandated a very transformed society in many ways.

Those policies are in my opinion pretty phenomenal.

As far as I can tell we have some of the world's more developed transformation systems.

They're not perfect but in many ways, they help make a difference in correcting the wrongs of the past.

Admittedly we still have a very long way to go.



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For some, things haven't changed

And when we look at the reality of our more liberated world we cannot help but notice how for many, some things haven't changed.

The youth of today might not suffer in the same way the previous generation did but they're not quite enjoying the fruits of a more progressive education system either.

Our population is made up of roughly 36% youth, that's close to 21 million people, more than a third of the total population

and their unemployment rate is 62.1%.

Our future rests in the hands of our youth, across the continent but the numbers signal a more distressing reality.

The majority of our youth fall within one of three categories: uneducated, unemployed, and unemployable.

And what's worse, coming out of Covid, most children entering grade two do not know the alphabet.

Our country is going backward, and a lack of literacy is one of the major causes.

So much potential... but we have to do something

It's an extremely sad situation.

I'm not an anti-South African; in fact, I'm excited about the fact that, I think the country still has so much potential. But we have to do something.

For so many who fought against the apartheid government, the youth of '76, the Hector Pietersens of that time, this is not what they imagined fighting for.

I realised as I climbed through the ranks in the ad world, while also gaining more exposure to the policies of corporate South Africa, that there is work being done to address some of the challenges faced by young people in South Africa.

And, that gives me hope.

From staff training to small enterprise development programmes, I'm proud to say we're doing good things.

We could do more, everyone can. From sponsoring bursars to absorbing interns we're helping shape tomorrow's leaders.



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The Blackboard community

Our agency has partnered with the NGO Room 13 a non-profit organisation that uses art and creativity to develop and empower children to become the best that they can be.

In this financial year, our company is funding six students studying in different tertiary institutes across our country.

We also have 27 interns on the Young Disruptors programme, and 30 learners in our learnership programmes, 27 of the learners are people living with disabilities.

The bulk number of our current interns are in our data and insight internship programme, this programme has been running for two years now.

This cutting-edge and innovative programme was launched to specifically address the shortage of quality digital and data talent in the country.

The need for performance marketing, end-to-end measurement, e-commerce, and other solutions saw agencies scrambling

to meet demand.

We support the Blackboard community run by Nkanyezi Masango, a programme that helps identify high school kids in townships who don't consider creativity as a career path simply because they don't know it exists.

The initiative strives to change that, one student at a time.

Agencies to help

Our industry has its fair share of issues but it gives me hope that things are happening that help in identifying, shaping, and nurturing tomorrow's leaders.

As a recipient of a bursary, I urge all agencies to help tomorrow's creatives.

With the numbers stacked against us, those in power can make a difference, from our industry to our clients in corporate.

A rising unemployment rate is no good for anyone in South Africa.

Here's to tomorrow's leaders, here's to our youth. Happy Youth Month.

ABOUT CARL WILLOUGHBY

Chief creative officer at Hunt Lascaris
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