



Webinar: Campus Youth Leadership Round Table

A focus on interaction with political parties and the effects of on-campus politics

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, cordially invites you to a webinar organised by the Democracy and Civic Engagement Unit on youth interaction and perception of political parties in South Africa.

The webinar will interrogate issues that influence youth interaction with political parties, particularly on campus. Looking at how on-campus politics are a microcosm of broader political engagement; the discussion aims to reveal how the interaction shapes the youth's behaviour in politics and elections and ultimately how it shapes the youth as leaders.

WEBINAR

Campus Youth Leadership Round Table

A focus on interaction with political parties and the effects of on-campus politics

Thursday 17 June 2021

11:00 – 13:00 SAST

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This discussion forms part of a series of discussions looking at youth participation in politics and elections, the factors that influence this participation and how youth representation and participation can be improved. The discussion also takes place against the backdrop of Youth Month, as we commemorate the role the class of 1976 played in shaping today's South Africa. Discussions such as these are vital to shaping and understanding the role of the class of post-1994 in shaping the South Africa of today and the future.

Background

South African youth have been labelled as a politically apathetic generation; this is a trend that shows up most strongly in election data where the youth make up a large percentage of the non-voting population. The 2019 general election data shows that 66% of the population did not register to vote, and the turnout among registered youth was low. This declining trend is also seen at local government level where in 2016 it is reported that only 53% of the eligible youth registered to vote and of those registered, it is estimated that less than 50% actually voted.

The trend of declining youth participation in mainstream politics and political processes is not peculiar to South Africa and is a globally prevailing trend. Youth participation in politics becomes a key discussion in context such as the South African one, where young people form a significant portion of the population and on the African continent where the demographics are moving towards more youthful populations, it is recorded that young people make up approximately 60% of the population of Africa.

Several reasons have been given as explanations for the low youth participation in elections. Research suggests that the South African youth are frustrated by formal political processes such as elections and do not believe in their ability to yield results. Issues such as corruption, poor service delivery and the age debate in mainstream political participation have been said to influence youth voter participation in South Africa.

While election data and participation in formal political processes are important for the democratic project in South Africa, this is not the only form of civic participation. It is important to note that voter apathy does not equate to civic and political apathy. We see this clearly in the rise in alternative forms of engagement such as social movements and the rise in youthful leaders in political parties such as the EFF and the vibrant political engagement on South African University campuses through political parties and other forms of organisation. We see interaction between student organisations and political parties increasing on South African University campuses and these have often been used by political parties as campaigning grounds. We have also seen campus student leadership being comprised of youth representatives of political parties, which has led to debates about the interests of these political party influenced structures. While we

also see these influences leading to increased political party involvement, high levels of distrust of mainstream political organisations such as political parties and their ability to truly represent and cater to the interests of the youth remain a dominant theme in campus civic engagement and opinion. Which has ultimately led to the rise of alternative forms of engagement and participation that run parallel to the traditional movements.

Political parties have a strong influence on South African University politics, trends on university campuses, youth behaviour and perceptions are seen as microcosm and measurement of how they will interact and participate in the greater society. In light of this and the prevailing trends, the Centre for Human Rights seeks to hold this webinar to facilitate conversation and understanding of youth engagement with political parties and the influence of campus politics on political participation.

The webinar will look at several themes that influence the participation of young people in political processes and how they arrange themselves towards this.

Objectives

This webinar aims to understand the trend towards increasing political party influence on university campuses alongside the trend of rising forms of alternative organisation. Particularly, to understand the effect of campus politics on general youth participation in politics and the role of political parties in influencing these. The webinar will also address themes such as upcoming elections to understand how political parties and other influences will affect how young people will engage with these elections.

Specifically, the webinar discussion will attempt to answer these key questions:

- To what extent does campus politics influence youth participation in politics outside of campus?
- What are the perceptions of the youth of political parties and their interests on campus?
- To what extent do negative perceptions of and interactions with political parties influence general civic participation of the youth and do positive perceptions and interaction play a role in improved participation?
- How do non-partisan youth and their affinity towards other forms of political expression and organisation imagine this shaping the democratic project in South Africa, given that party affiliation influences voting and other democratic expression?
- How do we imagine ourselves as leaders of the future – can we completely get rid of political parties, and should we?

Speakers

Opening remarks:

Ms Bonolo Makgale

Programme Manager, Democracy and Civic Engagement Unit, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Moderator:

Ms Mankhuwe Caroline Letsoalo III

Masters Candidate: Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law, University of the Free State

Panellists:

- **Mr Siggino Owen Kubeka**

Masters Candidate: Political Science, University of Pretoria

- **Ms Lerato Ndlovu**

Student Representative Council President, University of Pretoria

- **Ms Pearl Pillay**

Managing Director, Youth Lab South Africa

- **Mr Jerry Thoka**

Student Representative Council President, University of the Free State

Event details

Thursday 17 June 2021

09:00 GMT / 10:00 WAT / 11:00 SAST / 12:00 EAT

All participants are required to [register on Zoom](#).

Zoom Meeting ID: 949 5398 4423 (registration required)

The event will be live streamed on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

Contacts

For more information, please contact:

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