

Call to action: Youth, take up space!

By [Monde Twala](#)

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Shortly after being crowned Miss Universe in late 2019, South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi stated that there is a relentless need to "take up space". She added that, "Nothing is as important as taking up space in society."



The Culture Squad

Unmistakably, the youth need to be able to simultaneously take up space and find a space for themselves in society. Every young person has a right to a dignified existence, a right to an opinion and a right to speak their truth.

The youth provide a unique perspective on the present and the future. As the leaders, employees, innovators, agents of change and creators of tomorrow, it's imperative that we take their perspective into account. More than that, however, we need to nurture and develop them to become the best possible versions of themselves so that they, in turn, have the tools to build a better and brighter future for themselves and the generations that will follow them.

The Culture Squad

VCNA (ViacomCBS Networks Africa) has recently introduced the Culture Squad, a group of young, African artists who are the elected youth perspective voice ambassadors for the brand. They highlight how we are opening up culture in the industry and keeping the young creative narrative element alive throughout our content.

The talented personalities were selected across the VCNA platforms, meaning along with vibrancy, there is guaranteed element of diversity in the young voices. The vibrant ensemble includes viral sensation Uncle Vinny; MTV Base VJ Shamiso Mosaka; South Africa's MTV Base VJ Search 2017 competition winner, Tshego Koke; Farieda "Pharoahfi" Metsileng; Nomalanga "The Flame" Shoji; and new addition and recently matriculated Lerai who presents NickMusic on Nickelodeon.

In Nigeria, the Culture Squad members comprise; Nenny B, a popular and sought after VJ on Nigerian TV screens; Ehiz Okeoguale, an established TV presenter in Africa and fellow MTV Base VJ Search winner; and talented actress, TV star and social impact champion Folu Storms.

Youth cannot be silenced

According to the results of a global consumer insights study conducted in 15 countries by VCNA, 89% of youth said their plans had been disrupted, while 87% said they were rethinking their plans for the future. In addition, the study revealed that the youth believe their generation is up to the challenge of addressing the challenges they inherit. It also found that South African youth have incredible tenacity, resilience and positivity. The study focused on how the events of 2020 shaped young people's plans, beliefs and attitudes for the future.

This proves the immense contribution the youth can have in the state of the future. The youth's voices continue to have an impact in society, proving that they deserve to have the spaces to share their perspectives in the spaces they occupy. This year's #ZeroMalaria, *Malaria End with Me* initiative campaign that VCNA undertook acknowledges and applauds the impact of the youth by encouraging the youth to participate in the expeditions to end malaria with the current youth generation. The campaign's messaging rallied the youth to take issues into their own hands, boldly, in order to safeguard the future and to ensure that their footprint transcends into the decisions of tomorrow.



Use the Africa free-trade area to create jobs and enable entrepreneurship for the youth

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Encouragingly, even a global pandemic has not been able to silence the youth or stop them from sharing their voice. In that respect at least, we have moved on from 1976. Thanks to technological advances, the pandemic has been an opportunity for the youth to embrace their inner creativity, innovative spark and problem-solving abilities.

Earlier this year, we created a special human rights campaign that was aimed at reminding the youth – and South Africans more broadly – of the sacrifices that have been made to achieve democracy. Using young celebrity voices to drive awareness and educate their peers about their human rights, the campaign encouraged young South Africans to understand, respect and live the Bill of Rights – essentially, to take up the space they are entitled to.

Across our youth brands we are committed to driving campaigns and initiatives that educate and inform the youth whilst simultaneously empowering them to be the change they want to see. We've used our platforms to provide the youth with a voice, including through reality shows following the lives of young African, female artists such as *Boity: Own your Throne*, *Have Faith*, *Her Majesty: Busiswa and WOZA*, *Moonchild*. New programmes such as NickMusic, on the other hand, offer opportunities to young African artists while a number of other programmes that will offer the youth platforms and opportunities to share their voices are currently in development. The decision to showcase young African content has been very deliberate. The stories being shared are authentically African while at the same time offering a fresh narrative.



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To the youth of the continent, your time is now. Take the world by storm and unapologetically own the spaces you are in. Stand proud in the knowledge that yours is the voice of now and through active citizenship - you are generation change.

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