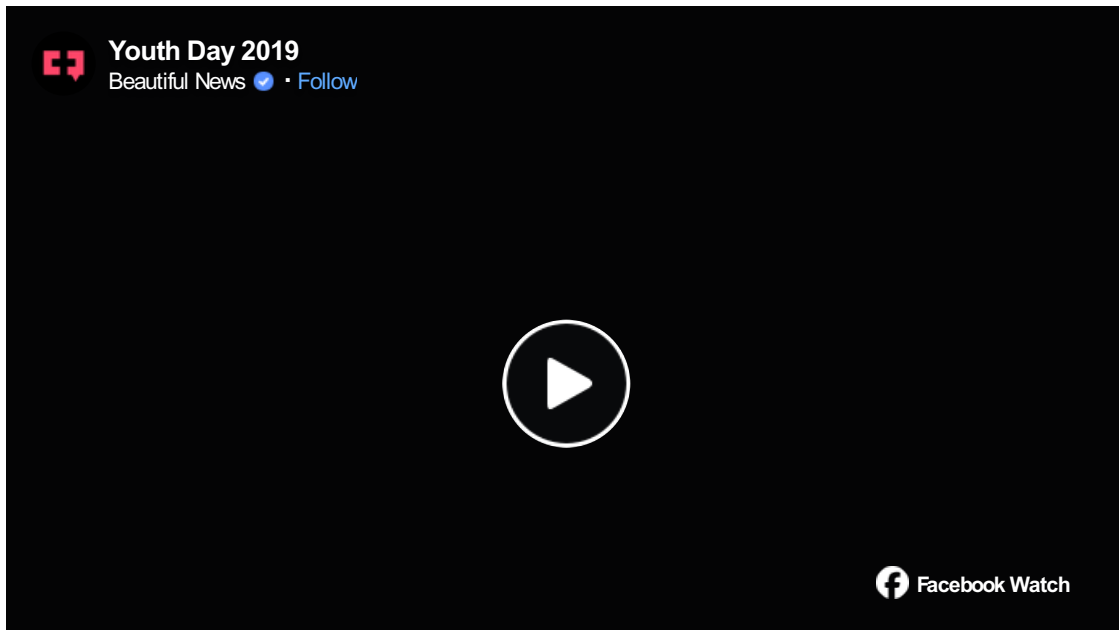


# No age limit on inspiration. Celebrating the promise of our young leaders

By [Michael Hathorn](#), issued by [Ginkgo Agency](#)

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*Around the world, young leaders are taking their future into their own hands. From South Africa to Sweden, the youth of today are working to create a vision of tomorrow that is better than today.*



Youth Day means a lot in South Africa. There's [the photograph](#) – Hector Pieterse cradled in the arms of a fellow student, one of hundreds of people killed by police in Soweto on June 16 1976. There's the protest. The tragedy in Soweto was part of a nationwide uprising by school students against apartheid's Bantu Education policy. And there's the legacy. The events of that day had a catalytic effect on the fight against apartheid, foregrounding the role that young people would play in the struggle for freedom.

In 2019 that legacy is more relevant than ever. The world today is not what it was 40 years ago, but the role of young people is just as important. The onus in South Africa and around the world is again on the youth to shoulder the burden of leadership. It takes energy, courage, and vision to create change – and we need leaders with iron-willed determination to get us through the challenges of the coming decades. [Political polarisation is increasing](#). [The climate crisis is here to stay](#), and its effects are already severe. But its worst impact will only be felt decades down the line. Today's youth will bear the brunt of the mistakes made by the adults of past generations. So why shouldn't they take control where they can? The most exciting, dynamic, and forceful movements for change are being led by young people. It's time we all took notice.

Change isn't easy or simple. It's a complex, often painful process. Teenagers and children are learning that, quickly. The planet is [entering a state of instability](#) that is unprecedented in human history. The predictable climate patterns humanity has taken for granted are soon going to disappear. Young leaders are going to have to find solutions.

## Global promise

It's happening already. [Forget media portrayals of millennials as self-involved and entitled](#). The world's most promising leaders are unhampered by the constraints of age. Leading this trend is [Greta Thunberg](#), the Swedish teenager who has become a household name by single-handedly igniting a worldwide movement against the climate crisis.

Thunberg has achieved so much at such a young age by being honest, courageous – and right. Her thesis is clear. Current leaders have failed the youth – so why should she and her peers stay in school and accept the status quo? Just as impressive is [Malala Yousafzai](#), the Pakistani education activist who survived an assassination attempt and went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize at just 17 years of age. Inspiration doesn't have an age limit.

## African ambition

Young leadership is particularly important in Africa. Our continent is home to [25 percent of the world's youth population](#) – a figure that's projected to rise to 40 percent by 2050. Africa is the only region in the world with an [increasing population of young people](#). There's risk there, but also promise. Across the continent, a [burgeoning generation of young political leaders](#) is rising up to challenge the incumbent collection of authoritarian octogenarians.

But change doesn't have to be driven by elected officials. There's just as much cause for hope in private citizens doing what they can. Massive change often starts small – just look at Greta Thunberg. Africa has its own cohort of young people making an impact in their own way, fighting for the causes that matter to them. Some of the most powerful examples are right here, in South Africa.

## South African leadership

The spirit of 1976 is alive and well in South Africa today. Young people are leading and inspiring others with talent and ambition. Activists, artists, socially responsible entrepreneurs, and sportspeople are showing that self-expression is its own form of leadership. They're driving change by pursuing their passions, redefining limits and showing the power of self-belief. [Michaela Mycroft](#) has cerebral palsy. She has also summited Kilimanjaro, completed the Cape Town Cycle Tour, and earned a host of international awards including the International Children's Peace Prize and the Nobel Peace Laureates' Medal for Social Activism. [Siphe Fassie](#) is a DJ and producer who worked with eight-time Grammy winner Skrillex at the age of just 15. [Amukelani Mokone](#)'s love for tennis took her from Soweto to Wimbledon as a teenager. And [Hunter Mitchell](#) was just 10 years old when he raised over R100,000 for Osita, an orphaned rhino whose plight grabbed his heart.

These are young South Africans who have grabbed headlines and attention for being themselves – for demonstrating authenticity and commitment to their dreams. Mycroft, Fassie, Mokone, and Mitchell are the essence of [Beautiful News](#). Their stories show that boldness isn't a consequence of age. Often it's the opposite. Growing older means learning caution, forgetting how to be fearless. The youth are inheriting the planet, and it's up to them to find viable pathways to sustainability. Based on these stories, that's a good thing. Young people aren't old enough to know what they can't do. They're young enough to imagine what they can achieve.

Beautiful News continues to release one uplifting short film a day. To see or submit a story to Beautiful News, visit [www.beautifulnews.co.za](http://www.beautifulnews.co.za), email [hello@beautifulnews.co.za](mailto:hello@beautifulnews.co.za) or join the conversation with #BeautifulNews and #MyBeautifulSA.

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