

# VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

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## Towards the African Renaissance

### A Young Voice on the Transformation from a Subject to a Citizen

*Although the notion of an African Renaissance is not a new idea, young voices from across the continent continue to carry the call for a philosophical and political movement to end the violence, elitism, corruption and poverty that seem to plague the African continent. In this month's "Voices from the South," Raymond Ncube, a young Zimbabwean and an Ambassador for the African Alliance of YMCAs' "Subject 2 Citizen" movement, explores what it means to be an African citizen, and how young people have the power to bring about a new era of African Renaissance.*

**By Raymond Ncube**

**Subject 2 Citizen (S2C) Ambassador, Zimbabwe**

Growing up as a child in Zimbabwe, the world around me spoke of a different future than that which is apparent in my life as I write this article today.

I was a dusty, skinny little boy whose future (in my own eyes, but also in the eyes of many of those around me) could not go as far as I could toss a pebble. I primarily understood the value of life based on what those around me could afford. I didn't have the audacity to dream.

Today, things have changed. Now, I stand before government Ministers and they listen to me. I now see

the world as a place of endless opportunities, together with a valley of citizens who believe that I am as good as I limit myself to be. I credit this shift in worldviews to my experiences with the Subject 2 Citizen concept which I have been an Ambassador for since 2012.

The S2C program, a youth leadership development initiative of the African Alliance of YMCAs, is designed to empower young people for the African Renaissance.

S2C emphasizes the importance of young Africans in having a voice, space

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Founded in 1985, the Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South who provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

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The Africa Alliance of YMCAs (AAYMCA) is a leading pan African youth development network on the continent, representing national movements in 22 countries. AAYMCA gives marginalized youth the opportunity for personal development and empowerment, and equips them with the skills to develop into leaders to make an impact on future generations.



*Photo: Raymond Ncube*

and ability to influence their choices and the outcome of their lives as individuals and within their communities. It is aimed at transforming youth from subjects who are open to exploitation, abuses and manipulation, to citizens who are creative and capable of generating positive impact from their actions for themselves and other youth.

My continent, Africa, is plagued by many challenges, and the youth are unfortunately usually associated with the causes of the bulk of them.

Unemployment, in most cases, has been labelled as the “laziness” of young people while policies that

ignore youth needs continue to stifle growth and innovation.

Moreover, the youth have been left out in the decision making and defining of the continents’ agendas (both internally and externally), even though youth today are more ‘global’ than ever before in Africa’s history.

Africa needs more Citizens today for the African Renaissance. It needs young people who are willing to claim space and influence. I am one of them who will dare do so.

As Citizens, we need engagement at all levels of decision making in Africa. We young people have begun campaigning for change in our countries, calling policy makers to change undesirable policies in economics, education and politics.

As young people, we want to have voices in issues affecting us and our peers in other countries. We have the desire and ability to speak on why African leaders cannot ignore youth issues in our countries.

We want to be counted. We are leaders of today because yesterday’s tomorrow

has begun.

True African Renaissance is the empowerment that allows Africa to take charge and define its today and tomorrow. Africa has the potential to be a global player in even the heaviest of issues that the world faces. There is no reason why the deadliest of wars are fought in Africa and peace is never known in its dusty streets. A new era is coming, and S2C is a player in addressing the ability of each man, woman and child to empower Africa.

Africa has a rich history and a heavily pregnant future. It has stories to tell. And we as Ambassadors have a responsibility to tell these stories. If we don’t, only those looking to exploit us will tell them. It is the role of young people to do this; it is our role as youth to make new stories, shape a better tomorrow and invest our skills in the African Renaissance.

Youth the world over are invited to sing with us because it’s a song for Youth; it’s a song for CHANGE.

*For more info on the S2C Program, and its current Ambassadors, visit <http://www.africaymca.org/>.*

