

Khanya College and CWAO Host Youth Day Commemoration at Workers Museum

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On Saturday the 12th of June Khanya College and Casual Workers Advice Office (CWAO) in partnership with the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) hosted a Youth Day commemoration event at the Workers Museum in Newtown, Johannesburg. The event was held to commemorate the youth uprisings of 1976 that began in Soweto and spread to the rest of the country, and also unite student and worker struggles of today.

94 people were in attendance at the event that took place outside in the park area with physical distancing due to COVID-19 regulations. Some of the organisations that were in attendance were Gauteng Community Health Care Forum, Simunye Workers Forum and Simunye Women Workers Forum (9SWWF). Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Centre coordinators from around Gauteng, Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) from Mpumalanga and North West provinces, and some Jozi Book Fair youth writers.

The event started at 9am with two physically distanced tour sessions of small groups from inside the Workers Museum to the Workers Museum Cottages. Also on display in the Workers Museum was a digital exhibition of the late Petrus Mashishi, former municipal workers union leader and board member of Khanya College.

The main plenary part began at 10.30am with MCs from Khanya College's Nosipho Mdlentshe and Gauteng Community Health Care Forum's Lillian Nhlapo opening the session with a welcome to guests to the Youth Day commemoration. The Bathekgi Book Shop and Jozi Coffee Shop was also launched as part of the Workers Museum Cottages. "Bathekgi sells books written for and by the working class," said Tebogo Mfikwe from Khanya.

Ms. Belinda Hlaka spoke about the history of the Workers Museum as a workers compound, the partnership between CoJ and Khanya and the newly restored Workers Museum Cottages that will now accommodate the bookshop and coffee shop. Chairperson of the board of Khanya College Father Mokesh Morar spoke about the importance of bringing all of the struggles of working class people against oppression and marginalisation together for a better society.

Following with this theme, the next part of the programme called 'Movement Building Under COVID-19', included a range of speakers representing working class organisations and communities.

Makhosazane Aphane, a young high school student and JBF Youth Author, spoke eloquently about the various problems facing schoolchildren especially in the working class schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it has highlighted the inequalities between the public and private school system.

Sydney Mashoaliba from CWAO reflected on his experience of the youth uprisings that happened 45 years ago, when they were told to run home because there was a shooting of students in Soweto. "We could see government mini planes flying around and from that day of running back home that's when my activism started," said Mashoaliba.

Crosby Moatshe, an OVC Coordinator at Ikageng in Soweto, and an addiction counsellor spoke on the challenges faced in communities by the youth, especially drug and substance addiction during this time of COVID-19.

The last part of the event was the cultural programme, including exciting performances and recitations from youth poets from Ikageng, JBF Youth Authors reading extracts from their winning short stories, a play from Perfect Storm Productions (a theatre group based in Soweto) and the Khanya theatre group, who performed a piece about the #OpenCCMA Campaign. The performances were enjoyed by everyone in attendance at the event.

All in all the event was a success in bringing different working class organisations together, and it was extremely educational in terms of understanding the essence of Youth Day and also the youth and worker struggles that exist today.

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