

Activists Discuss Media for Working Class Movements

By Yonela Gebengu

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Khanya College held its last All College Conference on 31 May 2025. Khanya has used the ACC discussions to evaluate its work and orient its work towards more effective strategies. This year so far, discussions with constituent organisations and activists were held on 10 and 12 April at the House of Movement, Johannesburg.

The latest pre-conference discussion, on 31 May 2025, focused on alternative media in working-class moments, using College literature from as far back as 2019 to anchor the discussion about media. The main reading used was *A Call for a Grounded Working Class Media*, written by the late former director, Cde Oupa Lehulere.

These discussions are build-up sessions for the All College Conference taking place on 20-22 June 2025. The ACC will follow just after winter school on 15-19 June 2025.

The panel spoke on movements of the early 2000s, the death of intellectual culture in working class movements, media. This included zooming in on how the South African working class is portrayed in mainstream media, with working class struggles often characterised as criminal. Other issues raised by the groups on the day included the rise of social media while highlighting its dangers.

Cde Shaheen Khan from Solidarity Action Committee Collective (SACC) said, “The ruling ideas of any period are the ideas of the ruling class. These ideas are reproduced by the mass media, radio, television, and even social media, and the education system. The working class has to develop its own ideas, to develop an ideological laboratory, its own newspapers, its own radio stations, pamphlets, posters, etc., to ensure its perspectives are developed in and through struggle to combat bourgeois ideology.” Khan continued by saying, “This is not only a means to disseminate propaganda—many ideas to a few people, like position papers, and agitation—a few ideas to many people, [such as] activities, information. But it is also an organiser, a central source of ideas, programmes and activities.”

Organisations in attendance shared which media platforms they use in doing their work. Some things were common to all the participants, including WhatsApp, TikTok, radio, newsletters, and Facebook. Others said there were challenges with data costs for participants. The group observed that the fleeting nature of #Hashtag campaigns often leads to short-lived efforts, causing movements to fade quickly. This highlights the need for social movements to build and sustain their own media platforms for lasting impact.

As part of the build-up, there was a four-day discussion and training camp on 27-30 May 2025 with young community activists. These community activists, coordinators, members of the Forum for Activist Journalists, and cultural workers are tackling challenges in children, youth, families, and communities. The group discussed sources under neoliberalism and the way it affects communities, families, individuals, and the work the activists do.

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