

## Welcome to the 27th Winter School

### Dear Comrades,

Welcome to the 27th annual Khanya College Winter School, a space for activists to debate, refine ideas, and develop their capacities. Since 1999, the school has helped generations of activists to contribute to social justice in South Africa.

Today, movements and community organisations in the country have been weakened by the impact of neoliberalism, poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. More than ever, we need to strengthen the social justice movement in our homes, communities, and society.

This year, the school takes place in the context of two important milestones: the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Student Uprising; and the 40th anniversary of Khanya College. In 1976, students' popular protest against inferior education and apartheid demonstrated how social inequality is reproduced in society. Although apartheid was formally abolished in 1994, it persists in new neoliberal forms that structurally deny the working class access to decent lives and living conditions.

Khanya was formed 10 years after Soweto in 1986, in the heart of student struggles and the National Education Coordination Committee (NECC). Khanya was geared to education for liberation. While Khanya assisted students to access tertiary education at Wits and UCT, 50% of students had to be women, and students were obliged to participate in the anti-apartheid struggles in communities and in unions. The college ran democratically, and promoted values such as gender equity and linking mental and manual labour. Education was linked directly to liberation.

The theme of this year's school is *Education for Liberation, going back to our roots*. It is an opportunity for a new generation of emerging activists at the School to critique the present society we live in and its education system(s); and to begin the process of understanding what kind of society we need to live in, and consistent with that, what kind of education is needed. We need to review the present context where black and white elites dominate the country's wealth and marginalise the majority. Why is there such widespread violence and social inequality; and scape-goating of African nationals? Can South Africa be changed? If so, how, what role can each of us play? Alternatively, what does education for liberation mean for each one of us?

Historically, the working class movement internationally has had to self-educate, and not rely on capitalists governments. Once again, this country is at this turning point, the need for a new cycle of struggle and a new cadre, as initiated by Soweto 1976.

This School is a space and opportunity to engage these issues, amongst others, together with other activists. Use your time fruitfully, to read, debate, learn, and self-educate. The School also uses popular education methodologies like theatre, art, music, and so forth, to make education and concepts more accessible. Your organisation and community have sent you to share in this process. We encourage you to honour the trust your organisation has placed in you, and to return home committed to building a new society.

During this school, we will highlight with activists the particular debates, small victories, and movement-building strategies in Khanya's 40 years of struggle. This is a remarkable milestone for an independent non-governmental organisation, committed to popular education, working class empowerment, and social justice. Many people were involved in the shaping and strengthening of Khanya College, and we remember and honour all of them. The problem is that too few working class organisations like Khanya have survived, and this reflects another weakness. This is part of the history and memory of the working class in South Africa, and we need to know our history, especially the lessons for today.

We look forward to having you all at the School. We encourage you to enjoy learning, reading, and the need to change the world.

Read the word and the world!

In solidarity

Maria van Driel

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