

## **The African National Congress Youth League after Apartheid: Political Consciousness, Involvement and Organisation among the “Post-young Lions” Generation in South Africa**

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The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) is the youth wing of the African National Congress (ANC). This youth organisation has been viewed historically as a vanguard in the ANC, since it was founded by the likes of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo who were responsible for the transformation and radicalisation of South Africa’s liberation movement in the 1950s. The “young lions” were then brought to play a key part in the final stage of the struggle against apartheid, at the time when the ANCYL was reinstated in 1990-91. It has ever since been considered an influential organisation in relation to the “mother body” ANC, especially in periods of internal struggle for key leadership positions (i.e. Cyril Ramaphosa vs. Thabo Mbeki and more recently Mbeki vs. Jacob Zuma).

My contribution will approach the issue of political involvement across several generations of activists that have made the Youth League and the ANC. It will wonder how representations of the past impact current young militants and their organisation, and reflect on the transformation of the ANCYL since 1994. Looking at trajectories of young leaders, it will possibly outline a few ideal types of post-apartheid young militants such as, for instance, the “young communist”, the “young technocrat”, the “young politico-economic entrepreneur”... The latter could be embodied by current ANCYL president Julius Malema who breaks the news on a regular basis through his provocative statements or the politico-financial scandals in which he is cited.

The issue of the ANCYL as a training ground for future leaders will hence be raised. I will finally wonder to what extent it can be considered or not as being in tune with the aspirations of post-apartheid South African youth. Can we assess the degree of politicisation of this generation through the Youth League? Does Malema speak out for the youth when he advocates the nationalisation of mines against the agenda of the ANC; or when he tends to revive the question of race in public debate in relation to economic inequalities or to other events such as the withdrawal of South African athlete Caster Semenya from international competition?