

Is South Africa differentiating itself from Africa for the wrong reasons?

 By [Antoinette Pombo](#)

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"We must make sure that at least there is some cushion for the poor so that they don't fall even lower than they are now. That we must do. But we must also see it is important we do certain things that would reduce the dependence of the people on grants," he said. This included encouraging small business and co-operatives.

"All of these things, so that people don't think it is sufficient merely to hold out their hands and receive a handout, but to understand that all of us, as South Africans, have a shared responsibility to attend to the development of the country," - This is an excerpt of then President Thabo Mbeki's speech to community development workers at an indaba in 2008.

Mbeki certainly wasn't revered for his theories, including the whole "HIV doesn't cause AIDS" fiasco, but he may have had a point here...

What makes South Africa so different?

The question is, why is it that South Africans have adopted a culture of expecting handouts? Contrary to common belief, handouts are not an inherent African ethos.

As one Nigerian put it in Polity.org.za "... They say once you put two Nigerians together, then you have a market. They're selling something to each other." That makes a lot of common sense. It means there's always someone needing some services or products and willing to pay for them.

So, isn't it a matter of figuring out what people need and then making or buying and reselling these services or products? As poor as Zimbabwe has become (only from an economic point of view!), "you don't see beggars on street corners there the way you do in South Africa" says Jane Lyne-Kritzinger from Youth Dynamix.

So, what does that mean?

Has the new government created a NEW problem?

Zuma was quoted in a City Press article in October 2014 entitled "*South Africans must wakeup!*" when he said "due to the extensive roll-out of services after 1994, South Africans had become dependent on the state."

He was making the point that nowhere else in Africa had so much been done to address the plight of the poor, yet you don't

see protests and strikes anywhere else.

He went on to say, "Our people are waiting for government. Our people are not used to standing up and doing things."

What do South African youth think?

Interestingly, even though the South African government has ploughed billions into infrastructure development and education, the youth continue to have a strong lack of belief in government. 85% of South African teens, according to YDx research, agree government is not living up to its promises.

YDx research also shows that 73% of teens are worried about getting a job. This continues to be one of the biggest stress factors for youth in SA. And they often get lured into crime and expect handouts and social grants just to make ends meet.

Linked to the high youth unemployment rate, YDx research also shows that 87% of SA teens are worried about South Africa's economic performance; with 51% of teens saying they would like to leave SA (for a better job / opportunity / or education overseas).

The consequences of being a nation that expects handouts...

Children brought up in a handout environment may naturally grow up thinking this is the norm so they develop an attitude of expectancy. What will the country do for me, what will my employer do for me, what will the richer do for me? And the list goes on.

This level of expectation is also evident in terms of their aspirations and dreams. Research conducted by YDx shows that youth are exceptionally materialistic: Desperate to catapult themselves out of their current situation and directly into a world filled with expensive brands, possessions and fame.

Our research also shows that although it is good to dream, goals without practical steps are just empty dreams that never get realised. So many young people have no idea HOW to practically realise their dreams and potential. They have no steps in place to make it work or become successful.

Not only do the youth expect handouts, other elements, such as the instantaneous nature of technology; and easy access to media ooze with aspiration value. You see successful people and celebrities who never talk about the hard work, the effort and time that goes into accomplishing things.

Because the youth only see the seeds of success, they expect wealth and success to come by easily.

ABOUT ANTOINETTE POMBO

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