Young Africa’s history through a birds eye.

PARTY at our training centres: celebration of our 20th anniversary.

But we also say goodbye to Raj A. Joseph and Gonneke Campen. A TRIBUTE to them.
From Zimbabwe

Walking the memory lane of 20 years of Young Africa.

In February 1998, I came to visit Dorien in Holland. We drew up the blueprint of our dream project. Skills training for young people 16-25 years old in Africa who are financially and academically disadvantaged; skills training integrated with life skills and entrepreneurship; hands on training delivered through production; all departments to be run as business units.

Two months later Dorien registered it in the Netherlands with a name - Stichting Young Africa (YA). She coaxed her dad out from his voluntary retirement to join Young Africa. The next 19 years of Young Africa, Mathieu Beurskens volunteered his time and energy, managing finance, creating networks, recruiting volunteers and dispatching containers to Zimbabwe and Mozambique with equipment of all sorts: lots of books, pens, clothes and gifts. I am, to this day, touched by his concern and his hard work for us. Dorien’s friends Gonneke and Astrid joined Mathieu to form the first board and supported the work of YA in their own unique ways.

On 21 July 1998, Dorien and I landed in Harare to pioneer Young Africa. I left my 32 years with Don Bosco and Dorien her life as Latin and Greek teacher in Holland. Within a week our meetings with the youth and the people of Chitungwiza gave us enormous drive and determination to start off the work of Young Africa.

We got moving with what we could immediately do. Looking back, we were not anxious about running out of money or what we would do when our three-month visa expired. Money started flowing in, thanks to contacts Dorien initially made in Holland, to start off the first training course for 40 young women in Entrepreneurship and the launch of a revolving micro-credit. In 2001 we opened Young Africa Skills Centre in Chitungwiza and by 2003 we were training 1000 youths annually.

In 2006, we opened a mini-skills centre in Epworth and handed over the two centres to local management. We moved on to pioneer in Beira, Mozambique. The only assured funds we had were to build our house and cover some expenses of moving, thanks to the award Dorien received from Vodafone the Netherlands in 2005. In the nine years that followed in Mozambique, we succeeded in building and handing over a Technical skills centre in Beira and an Agricultural Technical skills centre in Dondo.

After recovering from 10 malaria attacks each, we moved to Harare in 2015 to coordinate the expansion of Young Africa. Now we continue the task of ensuring close adherence to the mission and core values of Young Africa in each and every centre.

I am stepping down from my role in the governance of Young Africa after 20 years. But certainly, I will continue supporting Dorien in other ways in the work of Young Africa. I am very thankful that Dorien and I lived our lives for young people in this part of Africa, working with gratefulness and deep trust that the One who called us to begin this work and to reach this far, would go with us for years to come and bless us with abundance to do more and better.

Raj A. Joseph - Founder - Executive Director
From the Netherlands

Twenty years of Young Africa is a milestone. A beautiful moment to reflect personally and professionally. My involvement with Young Africa goes back more than 20 years. It started in first class of High School where I met Dorien Beurskens. We became best friends, both of us went to University in Leiden and went to Africa for the first time together. In 1995 we left for Nairobi, Kenya, to work with street children at Don Bosco. For both of us this was a life changing experience: in Nairobi I decided that for me it was time for a nice suburban life and Dorien decided that her future was in Africa. The rest is history.

From 1998 onwards, I dedicated my heart and soul to set up Young Africa. Together with Mathieu, Dorien’s Dad, we raised money, offered expertise and recruited volunteers for the projects. We took it very seriously. As ‘unpaid professionals’ we invested our time in writing project proposals, putting together newsletters, selling statues, organizing school fundraisers and having meetings with donors and other supporters. Wilde Ganzen was one of our first supporters and remained a huge supporter over the next 20 years.

Every two years, I traveled to Young Africa. First to Zimbabwe and from 2006 onwards to Mozambique. I went to gain inspiration, to meet the young people, to get to know the local staff and to catch up with Dorien and Raj. I learned so much from staying at the training centres. The life in Chitungwiza, a township close to Harare, seems so different at first sight but in the end we are all people who want the same: to be happy and fulfilled with family and friends. I learned to appreciate the country I grew up in, the Netherlands.

In 2015, a completely new phase started for Young Africa and for me personally. Young Africa was expanding into more countries and I started working at an office in my new role as Director and Fundraiser with colleagues instead of working alone from my home office. In this new role I worked intensively and pleasantly with my colleagues Erik and Annelies.

Despite the distance, and thanks to Skype and Whatsapp, I stayed in close contact with YA Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia. New relations were built up with new colleagues at the YA HUB and the recently established YA branches in Botswana, Zambia and Malawi. It was so great supporting Maarten and Jelena starting off in Gaborone. It was inspiring to expand the Young Africa network in the Netherlands and to gain more visibility for our work. The AFAS Foundation and the Dutch company Transitiepartners have played an important role in this. I got to know both organisations as very positive partners of Young Africa. AFAS Foundation as an example of a donor who is thinking along. Transitiepartners as a progressive and constructive company.

After 20 years, I am ready for a new challenge. I am very grateful for my time at Young Africa. I have worked with great pleasure and I have learned so much. Young Africa will always be a part of my life and have a place in my heart.

Gonneke Campen – Founding Board member - Director
Young Africa through the years

What started twenty years ago as a dream has grown into an international organization. With programmes which empower more than 1500 young people a year. During this journey, many people have supported us and we have experienced many things. In the coming pages, we will take you on this journey. Will you join us?

A dream. A strong conviction that the world can be a better place. Belief in young people. Dorien and Raj met each other in Kenya and discovered that they had the same dream and vision for young people in Africa. They decided to join forces and in 1998 Young Africa is founded in the Netherlands and in Zimbabwe. The vision and mission haven’t changed since 1998: empowering young people through an integral method at financial sustainable training centres.

In Zimbabwe, Dorien, Raj and the local board are working on setting up Young Africa. In the meantime, the board in the Netherlands has not been sitting still either! The first funds are raised in cooperation with NCDO and Wilde Ganzen. The money will be used to set up our first training centre in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe.

A year later, enough funds are raised and the construction can start. On a terrain of 2 hectares, multiple buildings are constructed: workshops, classrooms, hostel, et cetera. Enough facilities to educate thousands of young people in the

Did you know?

Zimbabwe has been suffering from (hyper) inflation in the past decades. In 2008, the inflation was 230,000%! This meant that 1 American Dollar ($) was worth the same as 2,621,984.228 Zimbabwean Dollar (Z$)! Memory Munema, admin officer at the YA HUB: “The inflation made us all billionaires of a worthless currency. I was pregnant with my first born that time. To give birth under the guidance of a gynecologist, I had to pay 4 billion Z$, while my husband and I made 1 billion Z$ a month. At a certain moment 100 billion Z$ could only buy three eggs”. Despite the (hyper) inflation, Young Africa Zimbabwe has always maintained 80% financial self-sustainability!
Our first student, Michelle: “In 1998 I decided to follow Young Africa’s microcredit program. This choice opened a whole new world for me. As a girl I was very shy, but in the first years I worked for Young Africa I gained more confidence. Now, 20 years later, I still work for Young Africa!”

A year later, YA Chitungwiza has its festive opening. 24 youths subscribed for the first round of training in dressmaking and masonry. Other programmes started as well like the library, yearly festival and the crèche.

There is a lot of unrest in Zimbabwe because of the presidential elections. Add to that the economic crisis. Luckily, this has no negative influence on Young Africa. We keep on growing, young people see the centre as a safe haven. We offer six courses and most of the departments are already franchised. Daily, about 500 young people make use of our facilities at the training centre.

YA Zimbabwe is a success. 1300 (!) young people make daily use of the facilities at the training centre.

A container filled with equipment, teaching materials and other donated goods is being shipped from the Netherlands to Zimbabwe. What a lot of work! Mathieu Beurskens, Wim van Noort, Bay Hazewinkel (not on the picture) and Peter de Kok have worked very hard to gather all the stuff, sort it out and package it. YA Zimbabwe was very happy with all the new equipment!

Franz Wensing (of Wensing Industrial knives in Apeldoorn): “I met Dorien in 2001 and I was immediately charmed by Young Africa’s method. I secured a donation from the Rotary in Apeldoorn. We also developed a long-term relationship between the company and Young Africa. We made a storage room available. From here, 8 containers were packed and shipped to Zimbabwe and Mozambique.”
Our first prize is there: the Vodafone World of Difference prize. With the help of the monetary prize we are able to expand to Mozambique.

Did you know?
That our first training centre is located in Chitungwiza, also called Chi-Town? Chitungwiza is a township, which means ‘high density area close to the capital city’. Chi-Town is located about 30 kilometers from the capital city Harare. It is estimated that between 350,000 and 1 million people live there. Therefore, it is the most densely populated area of Zimbabwe.

In 2006 we open our second training centre in Zimbabwe: YA Epworth. Under the management of Yvette Bellens-Bosma, the team in Zimbabwe is guided towards organizational self-sustainability. Dorien and Raj move to Mozambique to set up Young Africa there.

2008
YA Beira is starting to get shape. In 2007 students started in the workshops that were completed first. In 2008, the second festival is organized in Mozambique. It is one of many successful festivals where thousands of people come to each year. Through organizing festivals, Young Africa works on its visibility in (local) communities and young people get to know what services we offer. In the Netherlands we also celebrate our 10th anniversary.

Did you know?
That Beira has a major port? Not only for the hinterlands of Mozambique, but also for Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe which are landlocked countries. In a port city, there is a great need for educated personnel and therefore we decided to establish Young Africa in this city. We also adjust our skills trainings to it, for example, we offer the training for Customs and Excise at YA Beira.
The construction of YA Beira is almost finished, partly funded by the European Union in cooperation with Wilde Ganzen. A hostel has been constructed. The hostel programme is meant for young women who grew up in harsh conditions. The construction of this hostel has been financed by our long-term partner SERVE and Irish Aid. The young women can live in the hostel for two years. While they are guided by a matron to live an independent life, they also follow a vocational training.

Did you know?
That Namibia is one of the sunniest countries in the world with an amazing 2,645 hours of sun on average each year? In comparison: the Netherlands has an average of 1,521 hours of sun a year. A perfect country to introduce solar technology and that’s what Yvette and Dirk have done. During training, young people learn how to install and maintain solar panels.

Yvette, in 2006 project manager YA Zimbabwe, worked together with team Zimbabwe and realized that the organization was strong enough for a complete handover to the local team. After this job, Yvette wanted to stay involved with Young Africa and decided to set up Young Africa Namibia. In 2010, Yvette together with her husband Dirk, made an exploratory trip to Namibia. This meant a new phase for Young Africa. Not Dorien and Raj, but other pioneers would set up a Young Africa branch.

In the meantime, YA Beira has become a full-fledged training centre educating over a thousand young people each year. The need for vocational training in Mozambique is huge. Dorien and Raj decide in 2010 to explore the possibilities to establish an agricultural training centre in Dondo, Mozambique.

The birth year of the third Young Africa branch: Young Africa Namibia is officially registered. Yvette and Dirk have concluded there is a lot of potential for vocational training in solar technology and green building techniques. They develop a business plan and win the ASN Bank Worldprize with it! Welcome seed money to set up YA Namibia.

In Mozambique we also started expanding: the construction of our agricultural training centre in Dondo has started.

2009

2010

2011

Pauline Huis in ‘t Veld serial volunteer in Zimbabwe and Mozambique: “My highlight was the graduation ceremony in Mozambique in 2011. Although the courses are short, the happiness at graduation is many times bigger in comparison at the school where I work in the Netherlands and students get their diploma after six years of studying. It is a real victory! Their beautiful clothes for their special day, their sincere pride, the whole family who is there cheering, the ecstasy when they finally have their diploma in their hands and the many pictures which are made of this moment. It gives me goosebumps.”
Shop online and donate freely

Support Young Africa by shopping online? Yes, it is possible! At www.helpfreely.org you can choose from 1000s of online shops, and a part of whatever you spend will automatically go to Young Africa. While the prices in those online shops are exactly the same. It’s simple and 100% free. Register and start raising funds for Young Africa today!

Start your own Fundraiser

For young and old, a fundraising activity is a nice way to support a non-profit. It’s informative, sociable and easy! There have been some Young Africa supporters who, instead of asking for gifts for their birthdays, asked for donations for Young Africa. Or do you prefer a sports challenge? Get yourself sponsored! Create your own FUNdraising page on www.pifworld.com for example. FUNdraising has never been so easy! Enough ideas for your fundraising activity. Contact us, if you want us to think along with you. For schools, fundraising activities are an ideal way of connecting students with their African peers. Students can transform their involvement into action through awareness raising, combined with a fundraising activity.

Volunteering

Dozens of volunteers have either worked individually, in duos or in a group at our centres. Your tasks will be customised according to your talents, interests and experience. Former volunteers for example have helped with painting and decorating workshops, organising arts festivals or organising the administrative systems. We regularly have exciting opportunities to volunteer at our centres in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and with our team in Botswana.
We want to thank all our partners for working with us making the world a better place for our young people.
With three Young Africa branches, a lot happens! In the Netherlands Dirk and Yvette made their last preparations before moving to Namibia in 2013. In Dondo, Mozambique a start has been made with the construction of an agricultural training centre. Through co-financing from Wilde Ganzen classrooms have been built and the first trainings have started. In Zimbabwe expansion took place as well. A mobile training unit was developed to reach young people in rural areas. Young people can follow short courses there.

Did you know?
That Mozambique is a very fertile country, while only 10% of the land is currently used for agricultural purposes? The biggest part (80%) of this use is for own consumption. This offers enormous possibilities and therefore our 2nd training centre focuses on agricultural courses. Young people learn not only to produce for their own consumption, but also to make a profit out of it.

2013

2013 is the year of the official start of Young Africa Namibia. With the help of the Dutch company Volker Wessels, a container has been shipped to Walvis Bay. This container has been installed into a sustainable training unit where training in solar technology can take place.

In Zimbabwe, the number of trained youths has increased enormously, partly thanks to the mobile training unit which is a huge success.

The construction of YA Dondo, Mozambique, is almost finished. The first graduates receive their diplomas in Dressmaking and English. During construction, many people asked when the first trainings would commence and that’s why training already started in one of the finished workshops. In 2013 another container has been shipped to Mozambique with all kinds of teaching materials, furniture and machines. With these materials, the workshops were equipped.

2014

The Solar Technology training department has started training in Namibia! In one of the sunniest countries in the world, young people are trained in installing and maintaining solar panels. In Otjiwarongo, another city in Namibia, an existing but empty training location has been made available for Dirk and Yvette. Within one year after the official start, YA Namibia already has two training centres!

Dondo has been officially opened, although in 2013 the first students were already trained. This training centre focuses on agricultural vocational courses. There is a huge need for this in Mozambique. Young people can learn how to breed and sell cattle or poultry and earn money through it.

The mobile training unit with solar panels is installed and ready for training.
2015

2015 marks a new phase for Young Africa International, the founding organization of all Young Africa branches. In the Netherlands and in Zimbabwe an office is opened where team YA International will work. The team in the Netherlands, directed by Gonneke Campen, will focus on fundraising, communication and financial management. The team in Zimbabwe is guided by Dorien and Raj, who have handed over the management of Dondo to the local team and moved back to Zimbabwe. The YA HUB will focus on quality control of all activities within Young Africa and will guide the further expansion of our activities. Other countries? Yes, our ambition is as huge as the need for sustainable vocational training in southern Africa.

2016

In 2016, we expand into two new countries: Botswana and Zambia. Maarten Weers and Jelena Mitrovic are the project coordinators for Botswana and have been trained in the YA method in 2015. In March 2016 they leave for Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana, with their two daughters. Lindsay Cleary, M&E Officer at the YA HUB in Zimbabwe, decides to set up Young Africa in Zambia together with her partner Mark O’Dwyer.

A lot happens at our other training centres as well! In 2016, a staggering 2,274 young people are trained in more than 45 different courses.

Did you know?

That Botswana is included in many top-10 lists of most beautiful tourist destinations in the world? This is mainly due to her beautiful nature and political stability. Botswana is the oldest democracy in Africa. Maarten and Jelena see a lot of (self-) employment opportunities in the tourist sector and will offer a training in Hospitality.

2017

2017 brought a lot of developments as well and not all positive. YA Dondo had to close for seven months due to political pressure. Luckily, most courses could move to our other training centre in Beira. Fraud was committed in YA Zimbabwe. This is the first time we experienced something like this. A good example of ‘what doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger’. Policies and internal processes were sharpened.

On a positive note, we also received a lot of international recognition. We were recognized by the UNESCO-UNEVOC as one of the most promising practices in TVET. We won the AFAS Foundation ‘Best Charity of 2017’ prize. Our project in Mozambique with Light for the World, which improved the accessibility of our training centres for persons with disabilities, earned the Best Practice Prize by Zero Project. Activities in Botswana and Zambia have started. In Namibia, a demonstration house has been opened to showcase how sustainable energy and green building technologies work. What a year!
A lot happened in 2018. YA Zambia held its first round of training in ICT in 2017 and continued with it in 2018. To earn more income they also offer extra ICT classes for professionals in the evenings. They pay a higher school fee than the more disadvantaged students.

YA Botswana also started training young people. But that certainly is not the only thing they did. Almost every week an activity is organized on the campus: from Arts and Crafts markets to wheelchair basketball tournaments. A local artist is constantly working on renovating the campus with beautiful mural paintings. The training centre has evolved to a lively place where young people love to come.

YA Mozambique’s highlight of 2018 is an amazing one: a partnership with the British Government (DFID/JOBA) of more than 1 billion pounds! Unbelievable that YA Dondo was forced to close for 7 months last year. The trust of such an important donor does us good, especially team YA Mozambique.

Young Africa Botswana organized an open house at their training centre where the European Union in Botswana and the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport and Culture were present.

YA Zimbabwe was doing quite well given the difficult economic situation. Student numbers remained stable, although the wish is to have this number increase in the coming years.

Student numbers at YA Namibia also remained stable and they also wish to have this number increase in the coming years. Namibia is much thinner populated than the other countries we work in. It takes quite some effort to convince young people of the added value of vocational training. That is why YA Namibia gives in-house training at companies and organizes fun activities for kids and young people.

In Malawi, we started working together with Children’s Fund Malawi to ensure their training centre becomes financially self-reliant. From 2020, CFM will handover the centre to Young Africa. Besides this project in Malawi, we also train SOS Children’s Villages and Habitat Humanity in implementing our franchise method at their training centres in Malawi.

Young Africa Mozambique organized a fair where students showcased the trades offered at the centre. The day ended with a huge festival where one of the most popular singers of Mozambique, Mr. Bow, performed.
Young Africa Namibia

Young Africa Namibia organized several games and performances.

Face painting was very popular among the young visitors.

Young Africa Zambia

Young Africa Zambia asked their students and team to describe in a couple of words what Young Africa meant for them.

Inspiring, educative and motivating.

Young Africa Zimbabwe

Young Africa Zimbabwe had to postpone the festival until November due to a cholera outbreak. Better late than never though and it was a wonderful occasion. One activity was a photo exhibition, made by volunteer photographer Roel Burgler, which showed 20 portraits of students. The same exhibition was also displayed during our party in the Netherlands.

Guests enjoyed several performances and speeches.

Team YA HUB celebrated our 20th Anniversary together.

Young Africa Netherlands

Young Africa in the Netherlands organized a party with friends, family and supporters. Dorien presented Young Africa’s history to the attendees.
But also goodbye

2018 is a year of extremes. With the whole YA Family, we celebrated in seven countries our 20th Anniversary. But we also say goodbye to our co-founder Raj A. Joseph and original board member in the Netherlands Gonneke Campen. Together with Dorien Beurskens, Mathieu Beurskens and Astrid Schouten, they were the people who have set up Young Africa in the Netherlands and in Southern Africa. They were the initiators and the dreaming do-ers who wanted to make the world a better place and they did it. They will always be part of the Young Africa family. A couple of Young Africa family members wanted to say something about Gonneke and Raj:

Peter Zevenhuizen

We both grew up in Apeldoorn, although we did not know each other. The love for Africa, the first time Kenya. We both saw the beauty of Zimbabwe shortly after that and met the beautiful people who live there. To make work out of your hobby: Gonneke with Young Africa and I with Geschenk met een Verhaal (Gift with a story), which started in 1998 in partnership with Young Africa. We are both members of the Young Africa family and are both motivated to contribute to a better world. I am convinced that Gonneke will find something else to continue this good work. All the BEST!

Yvette Bellens-Bosma

My first contact with Young Africa was with Gonneke, in spring 2006, when I had a job interview for the project management position at YA Zimbabwe. Immediately we connected, a recognition between two people with a passion for Africa, and in particular Zimbabwe. The shimmer in her eyes when she talked about Southern Africa and her work with Young Africa... it made it clear that she was committed to the work with heart and soul. In 2008, Gonneke came to Zimbabwe to celebrate YA’s 10th Anniversary. It felt like a far family member coming home. In the Netherlands Gonneke was, together with Mathieu, the face of Young Africa: at schools, fairs, Africa-days, NGO meetings, they were always there. With full passion she managed to enthuse others about Young Africa. Whether we were in the Netherlands or in Africa, Gonneke always felt close due to her professional advice, support and a friendly chat. Gonneke, we will miss your passion and expertise. You stay a member of the Young Africa family. Thanks for everything and I will see you back in the Netherlands.

Dorien Beurskens

She was my first friend in the first class of High School. Together, we finished High School, went on holiday for the first time without parents and both went to college in Leiden. When we volunteered in Kenya together, the spark hit on for development cooperation and youths in Africa. Raj and I left for Zimbabwe in 1998. Of course we had to ask Gonneke to join the board in the Netherlands. During 17 years she has been the secretary of the Board. Project proposals, school fundraisers, communication, etc. - Mathieu and Gonneke were the supporting pillars in the Netherlands for our youth work in Africa. When in 2015, YA professionalized, Gonneke took charge of the team in the Netherlands. A couple of her major achievements: enormous network expansion, Best Charity of 2017 by the AFAS Foundation and Gonneke was included in the top-100 list of most influential people in the philanthropic sector in the Netherlands in 2017. Young Africa will never be the same without Gonneke. I will miss her as a colleague, but I also wish her the best with her new personal and professional challenges. My appreciation for her commitment, expertise and as a sparring partner is huge. My sincere appreciation for everything what Gonneke has done for me and Young Africa.

Robert Wiggers

Meeting with important partner organisations was one of my first to-do things when I joined Wilde Ganzen in 2002. This is how I met Mathieu Beurskens and Gonneke Campen. From that meeting I remember how modest Gonneke presented herself as someone who helped realise the dream of her good friend Dorien Beurskens. Dorien and her partner Raj were the initiators, the experts according to Gonneke. She ‘only’ supported them to raise funds in the Netherlands. Because dreams are free, but realizing them is not. In the course of 17 years, I worked together with Young Africa in my role at Wilde Ganzen. I got to know Gonneke as a modest person who commits herself wholeheartedly to reach the set goals. I have seen her development as a motivated ‘friend from’ to a professional director of an organization which grew, established more vocational training centres in Africa and which, due to growing responsibilities, had to hire paid professionals in the Netherlands. What an amazing amount of young people have been trained in all those years! Gonneke, my sincere compliments for your contribution in this!
Aksana Varela

I started to work for Young Africa in 2007 as an administrative officer. In a short time, I became a full-fledged Young Africa family member. Raj has always committed himself for great working conditions. It was clear that he enjoyed what he was doing. It is because of him, that I have found my vocation, I am now Director Young Africa Mozambique, and I enjoy it every day. For me, Raj is a real Father, honest and straight forward when needed. Language is never a barrier for us. Without restraint, he teaches everything he knows. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me and for your patience to stand by my side. I have to thank you for being the professional that I am today. I can manage big projects and budgets now. I am always capable of doing more than is originally planned.

George Chalissery

I got to know Raj during my studies in Tirupattru, India. In 1990 we met again in Nairobi, Kenya, where we both worked at a Don Bosco school. The first thing that impresses is his warm personality, full of fun and wit. He makes friends easily with people from all parts of the world and he makes you feel at ease in his presence. He has always a joke or two up his sleeve. With enormous commitment and passion he dedicated himself to the development of young people. That led to Young Africa. This project has won lots of appreciation from all corners of the globe. He is able to combine two qualities not easily seen together. Raj is a warm friendly person with everyone, yet at the same time, he is a person who would leave no stone unturned to see that the project ran efficiently without any hitch, especially taking care to oversee the quality of education passed on to the young. I would like to congratulate Raj for his dedicated and tireless work on behalf of the young especially those from the low-income families. Though he is stepping down from his position as Executive Director of Young Africa, I am sure he will be always around as a patron and Young Africa can always benefit from his expertise to grow and spread to more countries in Africa.

Edmore Makoza

Hopeless and lost, he saw something that even I could not see. I Edmore Makoza, come from a small mining area in Mashonaland Central. After completing Ordinary level, I came to the big town without even a clue of what I would do. I joined the motor vehicle mechanics programme at Young Africa Chitungwiza. I didn’t even know what the inside of an engine looked like. Mr Raj was patient enough with me and believed in me as well. The man was in a position to send me packing back to the mining area since he was the director but he told me that I could make it. I struggled to catch up, but in the long run I acquired all the knowledge required about Motor Vehicle Mechanics. I graduated with flying colors, I worked for three Companies namely Motor logic, Coslic Motors and Auto Inn, and I also managed to start my own Garage. And all this was because of a humble gentleman, Mr Raj. A million thank yous cannot express my gratitude. Mr Raj is still supporting me up to this day by giving me jobs to do at my workshop and referring new clients. The importance of hard work, dedication and positive attitude are only a few of the many precious things you have shared with me during my studies. Congratulations on your retirement.

Jacqui Joseph

I met Raj soon after he arrived in Zimbabwe at church. I attended the Braeside Catholic church and Raj, who was living in that community, joined the Parish. We became friends and taught a confirmation class together for some years. Though spending time together I got to know about the Young Africa project and joined the management board and later the board of trustees. Raj is not just a colleague but a true and great friend. I am inspired by his dedication to young people in Africa, his integrity and his passion for the work. I am always happy to be in his company to hear his many interesting stories and jokes and also all the good food he has cooked over the years. He is an amazing person; humble and honest and I wish him the very best. I cherish our friendship. Lots of love and best wishes for the years ahead. I appreciate all that he has done for Zimbabwean youths and his love for our country.

Mahara Goteka

I met Raj in 2002, then I ran a school that had joined the Young Africa “Federation of Schools”. Since 2015 I have worked more closely with Raj at the YA Hub Office and there are three things that have struck me about Raj. He is extremely and profoundly genuine in all that he does. There are very few such genuine leaders in our time and the world is crying out for such. Raj is driven by deep and sincere love and passion for young people. Raj operates with and from a deep reservoir of trust. Every one of us has a potential to thrive but the extent to which we thrive is to a large extent dependent on the conditions within which we operate. Raj, there are so many people, including me, that have thrived because of your leadership style of trusting and allowing people to become. Young Africa will miss your active involvement but be assured that your vision will not die because you have raised cadres in the family of Young Africa. You have rubbed it onto many, including me. Wishing you a deserved retirement. Glad that you will be within reach to give counsel, to tell your hilarious stories, to inspire and to cook nice dishes for the Hub team!
Bedankt! Thank you! Obrigada! Maita basa! Kanimambo!