

A reimagined approach is needed to solve South Africa's social ills

 By [Khangalani Dziba](#)

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Save your preaching for someone else. Today's audiences are much more complex and smarter than you think and will not respond to prescriptive ways in order to change behaviours. For years, I grew observing how we socially interacted and address matters of contention in my community and our country at large, many of which affected us in ways we could not even imagine possible. Needless to say, the results have not always been great because of the approach that has been taken and applied in solving them.



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These issues have ranged from political matters where we have seen our economy take shape for the worst due to poor decision making and uncertainty, health scares wherein the HIV epidemic took its toll on our healthcare system due to misinformed influence and guidance to those affected.

It has not only ended there because race discrimination continues to plague our society and no one solution has been found. Issues of sexuality where the LGBTI community has not fully been integrated into our societal norms continue to thrive, speaking deeply to themes of acceptance and issues of tolerance.

For years, this has been the reality. Why? Observation has led me to believe that enough has not yet been done to tackle these deeply entrenched and complicated subjects because if there was, we would have been able to craft proactive solutions that would be able to help us address them and they would no longer continue to lace the fragment of our society.

Edutainment is a vehicle towards social change and development

The truth is, there cannot be one approach in curating solutions and they will not always only come from one discipline but will span across different spheres. One such sphere that has not, in my opinion, been explored enough particularly in the South African context has been edutainment, another way of communication, which has across different industries and disciplines been used to address complex matters.

Research has shown that edutainment has been a vehicle towards social change and development across nations. It has been able to cross boundaries that have prevented other forms of behavioural change communication methods from getting audiences to critically engage with “serious topics.” It has upon successful completion empowered audiences to be able to make use of their own agency to change their behaviour, or continue with the desired behaviour for change.

The approach is in no way prescriptive but rather empowers those targeted with the right kind of information in ways that are subtle and intentional, thereby influencing and changing behaviours. It is by no means the only tool that can be used to address the many social ills we face but is an alternative approach that taps into people’s agency and should be given a platform. An opportunity and a voice!

Integrated and united approach that is inclusive

South Africa is a vibrant country that is faced with its challenges. Its ability to solve issues will not only come from traditional platforms like government or the private sector but rather from an integrated and united approach that is inclusive of different ways of thinking and solving challenges.

Creatives are a mine of problem solvers and are an integral part of the ecosystem of thinkers. We have seen this in how brands use edutainment in their approach to comment on real issues. Case in point, Nandos who have successfully put out provocative ads that have ultimately gotten audiences to think about what is happening in our country but in a humourist way; and Coca-Cola who have often used a softer and emotional connect approach to get audiences thinking about issues of uBuntu.

But edutainment is not the only solution we need to use to address our complex issues but we need a point of departure.

It is not that difficult, we just have to start somewhere!

ABOUT KHANGELANI DZIBA

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