

Activate! Change Drivers celebrates young SA leaders with new book

Non-profit youth organisation Activate! Change Drivers has compiled a book, *Heroes*, featuring some of the 3,400 youth 'activators' that have taken part in its leadership programme.



The organisation sees itself as developing youth who act as a “positive social force” in their communities, creating an expanding network of young people who are social, political and economic drivers towards positive change in the country. Activate! communications manager Kim Barlow explains further why it was so important to document the stories of its outstanding youth activators:

Why did Activate! decide to publish the book?

Barlow: The Activate! Network has been in existence for seven years, and in those seven years, the network has grown to over 3,400 young people. The positive impact that these young people have had on their communities is astounding - 90% of the network are involved in at least one pro-social activity - this is unprecedented in a time when self-enrichment and personal gain takes preference over the well-being of the collective. With new young people (affectionately known as activators) joining the network, the book provides a platform and opportunity to celebrate and showcase what activators are doing on the micro stage, in their corners of the country. With the book, we hope to inspire not only the network but also the country, by showcasing what is possible in a world where young people have hope in the face of challenges and how this hope can translate to the creation of impactful opportunities to tackle challenges.

How did the title *Heroes* come about?

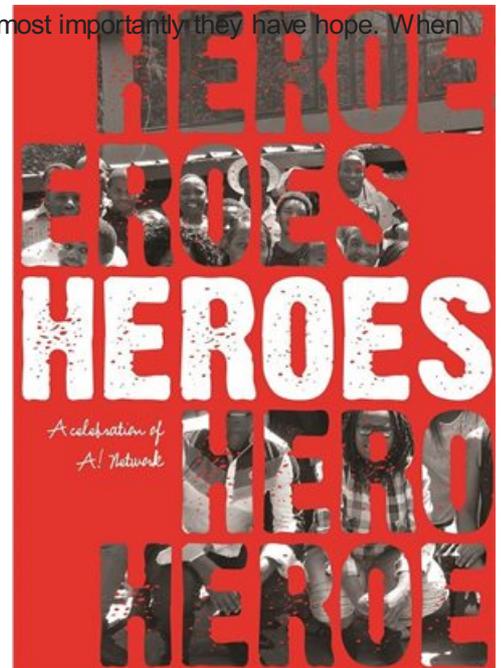
Barlow: We thought about activators; what makes them special; if we were to define an activator, what would that definition consist of? Then on a dusty autumn day in the Activate! offices in Muizenberg Cape Town, we got it, the book would be called, *Heroes*. It was a no brainer - when we think of the character of an activator; their resilience in the face of dire circumstances; their glass half full attitudes; their resoluteness in finding solutions and building rather than breaking down; their warrior spirit to live in hope for a better tomorrow, this is what a hero is, this is what activators are.

Activators are an inspiring group of youth who have dreams and aspirations, but most importantly they have hope. When young people have hope, often they also have the agency to contribute to a future where their aspirations can become a reality. This agency steeped in hope is realised in small actions. These small acts have the power to create change that advances their communities and eventually the country in a positive way. When young people have hope and create positive change that advances their communities, they become living heroes.

Imagine that - a group of living, relatable heroes who aren't merely sitting about and complaining, but are actively going out and making a difference! These are the youth of the A! Network. Through the heroes' theme, we explore how and why activators are heroes in their own right by looking at their individual journeys and the shift they are making in their spaces. The book tells the inspirational story of the A! Network under various chapters like active citizenry, literacy, health, youth economic participation and interconnectedness and inclusivity.

What do you hope readers will take away from the book?

Barlow: The hope is that other young people read the book or listen to the interviews around the book and recognise themselves in the stories of the activators. We hope they recognise that they too have the power to change their circumstances; to help others - and it all starts with small acts of kindness. We're sharing these stories to inspire the country and change the narrative that young people are apathetic; and replace them with stories of youth who are making a positive impact.



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