

Zimbabweans debate future dreams on social media

The Zimbabwean newspaper launched its [#MyZim](#) campaign last month and Zimbabweans have been responding in their thousands to it. The interactive campaign, active on several platforms, is aimed at getting Zimbabweans everywhere to contribute to a debate about their common future - rather than looking back to the past with recrimination and regret.



"[#MyZim](#) is about the hopes and dreams of a better future for Zimbabwe, by Zimbabweans. Inspiring people to speak out about the Zimbabwe they want is a vital component of reclaiming our Zimbabwean identity that in many ways has been stolen from us," says Wilf Mbanga, editor and founder of The Zimbabwean.

What it means to be 'Zimbabwean' is said to have changed dramatically in the last decade, driven by the country's economic collapse as a result of political mismanagement and corruption. Those in the diaspora, unlike many diaspora residents from other countries, are economic or political refugees. Most Zimbabweans are not in the diaspora out of choice. They would much rather be back home. They retain very strong connections with home. Most travel back at least once a year, and almost all have family back home that they are supporting. This makes for a rich web of global connections that form an identity which runs from rural Zimbabwe, to Harare and London to Sydney.

A chance to add their voice

The multimedia campaign gives everyone the chance to add their voice to the conversation about the future they want - via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, SMS or email. 25,000 SMSs have reportedly been sent and 45,000 people visited the [#MyZim](#) website link last week.

The subjects covered have spanned a broad spectrum - from the economy to religion, sport to family, education, social services, politics and governance.

Key themes that have come through time and again are the desire for unity, peace and an end to corruption. There have been spirited debates around race, tribe and religion.

The views of hundreds of people have been published in the newspaper every Thursday, printed and widely circulated throughout South Africa, in Zimbabwe and the UK, as well as on the website at www.thezimbabwean.co

Three weeks after the launch, [#MyZim](#) has nearly 9,000 Facebook fans and last week the debate reached almost 110,000 people, according to statistics generated by Facebook. YouTube videos of people sharing their hopes for the future have been viewed more than 4,000 times.

"This viral campaign searches out the voices of Zimbabweans - their hopes and dreams for a better future for our country - and gives them wings by communicating them broadly via social media. We stand on the brink of a new tomorrow and we need to face it with confidence and unity. Since we began publishing in 2005 The Zimbabwean has always been about access to information, in the belief that people deserve to know the truth. We hope the [#MyZim](#) campaign will take this commitment to a new level of community participation and freedom of expression for all our readers across the world," says Mbanga.

Contributions

Some recent campaign contributions on Facebook include:

"I want a Zimbabwe where I can get a job and work for my family. I have four kids and only worked once in my life in 2004. I tried vending but municipal police destroyed my business."

"I want a Zimbabwe where people, in order to live, are not cowed to favour certain political parties not of their choice."

"We want freedom"

"A Zimbabwe with zero tolerance to corruption."

"I want a Zimbabwe with peace, without violence. Where our farms are productive and people can afford cheap but good quality food."

"A Zimbabwe that hogs the international spotlight for all the right reasons."

"I want Zimbabwe to regain her bread basket status."

"Lasting stability, improved infrastructure, the opportunities each Zimbabwean deserves."

What Zimbabwe do you want? Your voice, your hope.

You can follow, like or contribute via [Facebook](#), Twitter (use [#myzim](#)) and SMS 07712 246 400.

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