

# BLACK MONDAY

*Citizen Action Against theft of our money without SHAME!*

## Editorial

### Say No to manipulation and voter buying

Uganda has the world's youngest population with over 78 percent of its population below the age of 30. A significant percentage of Ugandans registered to vote are those aged between 18 and 35 years. It will be interesting to watch how the 2016 election will play out amidst the formation of various "issue-based" informal youth associations like the "poor youth", "jobless brotherhood", the "unemployed youth and the "national association of the unemployed community" among others. This might be a point of explicit interest considering that members of these informal groupings could mobilize demographically to form the biggest voting bloc. It is this category that is under many instances harnessed to fill the candidates' youth brigades such as Kibooko Squad, 3K Brigade, Mwoyo Gwa gwanga, Black Brigade, etc.) In the 2016 general elections, political parties are going to be hard pressed to convince young people that they can address their concerns in exchange for their votes including exchanging money for votes. This edition of Black Monday thus reinvigorates the debate on the causes and impacts of commercialized politics on young people by young people themselves. It offers an investigation into voter bribery and its adverse impact on young people's meaningful participation in elections, leadership and how the youth can hold their leaders accountable. This serves to call on the young people to be very proactive in exercising their right to vote and say no to manipulation and voter buying.

Lillian Bagala  
Executive Director  
Uganda Youth Network

# Voter bribery: Youth severely hoodwinked



Youth groups kneel before their leaders as sign of support in the upcoming 2016 elections. Youth have presented themselves as vulnerable to politicians and could be a target for voter manipulation instead of being consulted as key stakeholders in the political arena.

As the electoral commission released the revised general elections roadmap, one ought to ask how ready young people are to participate in the elections in 2016 given their numbers and their fresh entry into the electoral processes. The recently concluded National Census statistics indicated the Ugandan youth population below 30 years at 75% of the entire population. Given the increasing signs and indicators of vote bribery going on that could hoodwink youth participation in electoral processes. The president has been seen giving out money in sacks to the youth, our youth leaders kneeling before the president begging for peanuts and showing their purported support, young people forming youth brigades and youth leaders supporting president Museveni's sole candidature for president. Besides that, potential leaders/politicians give free seeds and seedlings in churches and at fundraising events.

In this edition we share with you an interview with a reknown youth leader; **Western Uganda Youth MP Hon. Gerald Karuhanga** who has been here, done that in so short a time. From breaking his political ground as Guild President of Makerere University to emerging as one of the most revered and vibrant MPs, Karuhanga has given youth participation in politics a whole new dimension. He shared with us his experience, challenges and insight into the place of youth in politics.

#### At what stage did you join politics?

At Makerere University I was a guild speaker before contesting for the guild presidency (2006-2007). It was a tight

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race, we were about 24 aspirants and what made it a tougher hurdle for me was the state attempts to bring me down because I was openly working with the Forum for Democratic Change but the more they tried to destroy me the more students I won over.

#### What are some of the horrible things they did?

Oh so much! The ones that stood out were the propaganda campaigns they carried out, trying to paint me yellow. At that time and I think even now, the National

Resistance Movement (NRM) was loathed at the university. So to bring me down, NRM operatives sent out their boys to go telling everyone I was one of them and a masquerader in the opposition, we called it chemical in student politics world. There were so many other forms of black mail and intimidation my campaign agents and myself were subjected to but we managed to sail through.

#### What lesson did that experience teach you that touches on youth participation in politics?

One of the things I mastered was the art of mobilization and the power of networking but also how to run a successful campaign without a lot of money. From that experience I now have an idea of what it means and takes for small money to beat big money in politics. I run a campaign with limited resources and made it. This is a particularly important aspect of youth participation in politics. Many are put off by the deceptive thought that without money you cannot run a successful campaign.

You hinted on a very sticky issue of commercialization of politics in Uganda.

#### From your experience, how serious a challenge is to youth participation in the political arena?

It is one of the most discouraging factors. To many young people, electoral politics is a tall order; it is costly as it involves millions of money so many give up. Sometimes they just lack information on

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# Voter bribery: Youth severely hoodwinked

**FROM PG 1**

how to go about it, for example how small money can beat big money. May be some look at the size of parliament and the rugged nature of our political terrain and get demoralized, thinking they cannot impact much afterall.. Well that is true, but to those I say, it is not about age, it is about the self belief and passion. Of course parliament has its host of challenges, for instance the first shock I got was the highly partisan nature of the house. The ruling party's ideas and desires, as opposed to national interests, take the day, sometimes you have the most incredible motions being passed, things you cannot expect to go beyond the first mention of a member become law. But amidst these challenges young people in parliament have been able to score some goals. One of the proudest achievements I personally take credit for is the chief justice debate. You had a regime abusing the constitution that obliges the CJ to retire at 70 and insulting young people, literally saying that you can wallow in your ocean of unemployment, we don't care, in fact even those meant to retire can be recycled. This was sad but I put up a fight. We also engaged the government on corruption and brought the discussion to the table more vigorously. Of course I cannot say we have done the best, the average number of MPs is 44 but we rarely get youth related issues shaping the agenda. There is that disappointment, I think we have not used the opportunity well.

**How were you able to penetrate through that wall. There was the contentious oil bribery allegations that raised a lot of dust, the age limit, the CJ question and so much more. How did you manage to sail through the murky waters?**

I think for me leadership is more of a passion, it is what drives me, as opposed to age and experience. My passion, to be honest with you, has been centred around dealing with how to improve the plight of our people. It is our duty as citizens to uplift our country men and women. When we progress in life, others should also progress. With such passion and drive, I can assure not age, not experience, not anything else can come in your way. How was the Makerere University convocation (association of alumni and staff)

that you lost to NRM Electoral Commission boss Dr Tanga Odoi? I honestly did not find that an election, I was shocked an institution of higher learning could go so low. It was not even sham but catastrophic to say the least. That a reputable university could fail to organize an election for its old students and staff was really embarrassing. But of course I am not demoralized, actually I am motivated more to fight for a better country, that election brought me to the grim reality of a bigger job we have to do to organize our country.

**What in your view is the biggest hiccup for youth participation in politics?**

I think it is compounded in the lack of appreciation that it is possible for the youth to

be at the centre of political participation. The deep seated conviction and self belief is still lacking. So many young people still thing politics is this costly and rough game. We need to work on fixing that. The other challenge though is the longevity of the regime. If you have a regime in power for 30 years, it locks out and suffocates many young people. Take the example of minister Henry Kajura. It is almost next to impossible for a young person, however capable they are, to beat him in an election because he has been there for almost 40 years. So these things all play against youth participation in politics.

**Are as a country are we making progress in so far as youth participation is concerned?**

Whereas it is true that there is an increase in youth participation but participation is beyond the numbers. It goes beyond having a National Youth Council and youth MPs, for me we should assess ourselves at the level of youth participation in government. We foreexample have many youthful MPs, who are not directly elected as youth MPs but we don't seem to have much vibrancy around youth issues in the house. What is your advice to young people out there seeking to play an active role in the political governance of this country?

My appeal is that we should all take part either by way of elections or contesting for electoral offices to better the leadership of this country. we cannot shun politics and watch as the affairs of our country are being mismanaged.



Western Uganda Youth MP Hon. Gerald Karuhanga

## Voter bribery: Youth speak out



“Election bribery erodes civic consciousness of young people and promotes sectarianism in governance discourse. Bribery compromises with youth rights of vote power and tax power. Bribery erodes our demand for accountability in service delivery and quality legislation and leadership at both national and local level.”

Jomeo Richard Komakech, Youth Activists, Author and Heads Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) Gulu

“As a Youth leader, I have no doubts that voter bribery is a very bad practice because it breeds hatred, violence, and chaos during elections. After the elections, we find ourselves trapped with very weak leaders who are poor performers and self-seekers. I was an independent candidate during the youth campaigns 2011 for my current position competing with an NRM candidate funded by a party who bought votes for cash and gave

sugar and soap to voters. I also did the latter. Those elections left me broke and in debt so I had to sell my two motor cycles. Today – four years later – I am still in debt. The government should pass a tough law against voter bribery and commercialization of politics”

- Innocent Businge (Male Youth Councillor Central Division Masindi Municipality Bunyoro Region)

“A particular phenomenon that has had a debilitating effect on the youth is the emergence of Godfathers and mothers, instead of mentors. This has reduced the young into appendages of individuals, only parroting what the holder of the puppet strings has said or done. Crudely put, instead of being treated as partners/colleagues in the quest for democratization, a number of young people have both been used and abused.”

Andrew Karamagi ; Lawyer and Youth Activist



“Voter bribery deprives citizens of good leadership since they are influenced by the bribes and not the people who are worth the leadership”

Kyokusiima Phionah, youth development worker -Bushenyi district.

# Is the National Youth Council pushing the youth agenda?



Members of the National Youth Council after presenting a petition at Parliament; recently they presented another petition to the Constitutional Court demanding for lifting age limit for presidential aspirants. There have been concerns about the Council's representation and whose views they voice.

Since 1986, the government of Uganda has aimed to ensure that young people get representation in matters of policymaking and good governance.

In 1993, the National Youth Council Act created the National Youth Council (NYC). It organises the youth of Uganda in a unified body, engage the youth in activities that are of benefit to them and to the nation, and protect the youth against any kind

of manipulation. This should empower young people with bargaining power and a unified voice that could ensure effective representation and accountability in government. But is that the way it is today?

An analysis of NYC shows many flaws in its activities, which leave people wondering if it still represents the agenda of the youth across Uganda or if it is just a camp of opportunists representing a small fraction of the youth.

Under the National Youth Council Act, two student representatives are supposed to be elected by the Uganda National Students' Association (UNSA). However, we have also witnessed cases where President Museveni has deliberately intervened to compromise their independence. For instance, during the NRM day celebrations earlier this year, The Observer newspaper reported that President Museveni met the 344 delegates and lectured them

on ideology. To put the icing on the cake, he donated 60 million shillings and two cars to the students. These are calculated moves to influence youth organisations. Financial facilitation of youth institutions should be adequately catered for in the national budget.

An interview with Anna Adeke, the former speaker of the Uganda National Students Association (UNSA), reveals, that NYC is a cohort of NRM youth who want to dominate the political and bargaining space without paying attention to the true needs of the youth.

According to Adeke, the problem emanates from the manipulated electoral college structures which favour one political party and thereby do not provide a healthy competition between young people across the political divide.

In 2013, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) completed investigations into the alleged misappropriation of 6.4 billion shillings allocated to the National Youth Council. The money had been allocated to the National Youth Council by the government in the 2010/2011 financial year and was meant to facilitate elections, youth meetings, and forums under Uganda National Student's Association - UNSA. Still again, Robert Komakech, the Gulu District Youth Councillor, stated in December 2013, that NYC continues to have elections yet it has never met in six years!

If this is how the Youth Council

operates, it raises questions of whether we as young people have the moral integrity to demand for change since our youth leaders are also beneficiaries of the corrupt system. It has also been observed that the leadership of the NYC has prioritized partisan personal interests at the expense of the larger youth population. For instance, early this year, the leaders of the NYC went out of their mandate and presented a petition to the Constitutional Court seeking for removal of the presidential age limit without consulting their representatives.

To achieve a change in the system, Anna suggests an overhaul of the Electoral College System beginning with the way elections are conducted. If these Youth Council elections are not regulated and made fair, we might not get chance to produce legitimate young leaders to run this country when the current generation of leaders fade out. More so, the National Youth Council leadership should shift from being passive recipients of ideas and financial enticement to instead organize and champion issues affecting the youth population in the country.

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## Voter Manipulation: A tale of a youth brigade member

There has been a hot item known as the Youth Brigade, but no one wants to believe how our leaders have used the brigade for selfish reasons especially during elections.

This is the story of a "youth brigadier" that highlights how he joined, what the brigade did and the violence they caused prior to, during and after 2011 general elections.

This group is based in Kijura slum/township established in 1996 with the basic aim of getting young people organized to provide labour within and outside the slum. The membership keeps changing but they are currently 20 members.

Prior to 2011 due to unemployment, idleness, and need to make a quick buck, the group started to provide highly classified service for political candidates. They specialized in sabotage, organizing, and mobilizing for the candidate with the highest bid. They would organize themselves to disorganize and cause violence at rallies, waylay entourage of a certain candidate, and beat them up to scare them away. All this was done on an understanding that they would be paid 100,000 to 200,000 shillings

for each assignment.

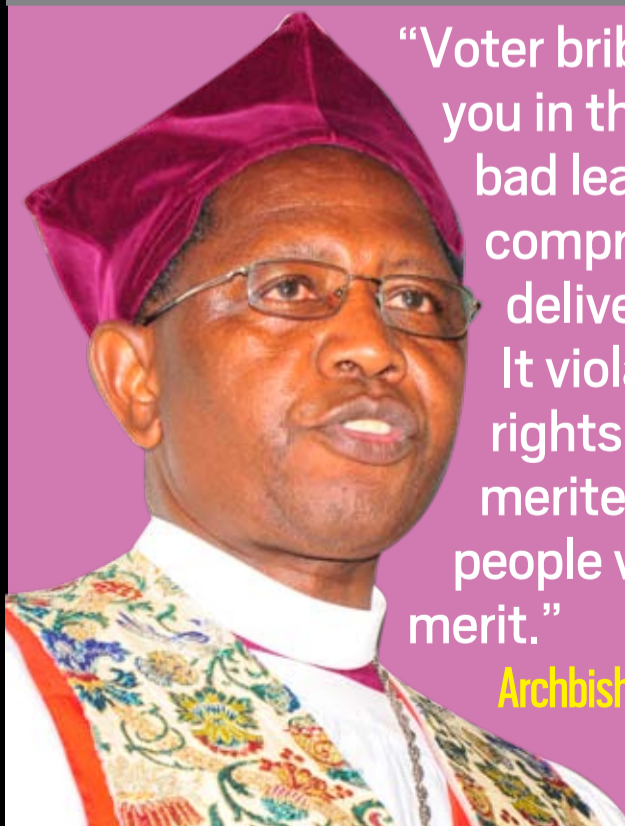
This group also worked with and for the Uganda police – sometimes assigned to hit and scare off politicians and civil servants. The group would also be used to distribute sugar, soap, and other materials to buy voters.

The groups are spread across the country and perceived as a cheap option when dealing with a competing candidate. The outcome is that many young people lose the opportunity to participate while some are arrested as criminals and involved in accidents.

*The narrator of this story was a member of a youth brigade but is now reformed youth leader, trained by Uganda Youth Network and RDP Uganda. Today, he is one of the young leaders we are proud of and a role model to others. He shares his story at various forums to encourage others to stop violence during elections.*

*As narrated to Okwaimungu Richard (aneurukwai@yahoo.co.uk)  
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## SAY NO TO VOTER BRIBERY



"Voter bribery throws you in the hands of bad leaders and compromise service delivery. It violates electorate rights to choose merited leaders. Let people vote you on merit."

Archbishop Stanley Ntagali

# SUMMARY OF CORRUPTION SCANDALS TO LOOK BACK AT



## What must we do to get our money back?

Wear only black clothes every Monday to show you are tired of theft.

Demand political action from the President

Isolate every thief implicated in a theft scandal. Don't invite them to your burials, weddings.

Do not buy goods or services from businesses owned by thieves. Support Ugandans working honestly to make a living.

Until all the thieves have returned our money.

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