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Emmanuel Dennis: “We Cannot Give Up On Our Country.”

Emmanuel Dennis is the Convener of the National Youth Convention (NYC).

Why are Kenyan youth detached from politics?

There's a cartel in Parliament that owns Parliament. If you're a young person who is interested in changing the system. If you got yourself in Parliament and tried to change the system, for God's sake! How are you going to change someone like Michuki? It's so difficult to change such an individual.

Somebody like Kibaki who has been there since the time he became Member of Parliament, and you think you're going to change this guy today? There's no way you're going to change them.

[Parliamentarians] sometimes try to fight from within, and kill the aspirations of young people. Young people have now felt like they're just wasting their time, by trying to engage with the system.

Look, for example, at the last General Election where we had the largest number of young people waking up very early in the morning going to cast their vote.

What happened? We had a swearing-in of a President at night, then later on we had these

two protagonists (or antagonists) – Kibaki and Raila – coming together to form a coalition Government which has ended up killing many of the aspirations that young people have had.

In such a situation where you wake up every day and go look for a job; you can't find a job, where we're having thousands and thousands of young people graduating from the University, where we have thousands and thousands who are going through parallel education and getting their degrees, flooding the streets and there are no opportunities for them. What would you do?

We must all come together and push for what we are trying to advocate for.

Your predictions for 2012?

People think that - given the experiences of 2007 - 2012 is going to be much worse. I tend to think differently. As young people who have a stake in this country, as young people who have more years to live in this country, we are the same young people who were used in 2007.

We went and killed our neighbors and went and did bad things. Those people who paid us have their children outside Kenya, going to

school. They will be able to charter flights and get out of this country if things got thick.

We will remain in this country, we will burn in this country. If there's going to be any war in this country, it's going to be about class. It's going to be about those who have, and those who have not.

I know there's been frustrations. In the past we've used our votes and it has not translated to anything. We cannot give up on our country. This old guard that has been in the system since 1963 will not be in this country forever.

Emmanuel Dennis is the Convener of the National Youth Convention - which offers a national platform to celebrate the achievements of young Kenyans in changing public life. Find out more about them on their Facebook Page.

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