



Mail & Guardian

2024

200 YOUNG

SOUTH AFRICANS

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who inspire us to reimagine  
a bright tomorrow







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# 200 reasons to believe in South Africa

Journalism is a cynical profession. It's in our core job description: we are here to hold the powerful to account, to wade through their spin before interpreting it and analysing it for our readers. The craft can be demanding and dispiriting.

The *Mail & Guardian's* 200 Young South Africans is a welcome tonic for our weary souls. We've been doing this project for 19 years now, and yet we are still amazed by the talent, determination and enthusiasm of the young people in our country. This year we received 4 000 nominations, each accompanied by a worthy reason why their person warrants inclusion in this list. Whittling the names down to 200 is not easy, but it is fulfilling work, and our inspiration is drawn far beyond just those who made the final cut.

This is one event on our calendar that

touches all of us in our publication. From top to bottom, across editorial and commercial, almost everyone contributes to the occasion. Their work has been invaluable in preserving what has become a South African institution.

But this is not about us. This is about 200 young people who deserve far greater recognition than these pages offer. Each of them gave us a reason to imagine a great tomorrow.

This is not a box-ticking exercise. There are no stale criteria to achieve to unlock this honour. There are no amount of social media followers or a high enough salary that will earn your place here. Any scale at all is impossible — we have first-year students and experienced entrepreneurs; actors on global television and activists making a simple difference in their community gardens.

What unites these names is a determina-



tion to be the best version of themselves, to the benefit of those around them and their environment. Everyone here has a story that we believe in.

But the importance of their success goes far beyond just inspiring us. We are a nation, by many metrics, that is becoming apathetic.

We have just celebrated three decades of democracy but our national election turnout was lower than anyone would have conceived of 30 years ago. We are

sitting on unacceptable levels of youth unemployment that drain hope from our country and sow disaffection in its place.

South Africa needs people who still believe in its extraordinary potential. We need young people whose dreams are not tainted by cynicism. Young people who relish the road ahead and are not daunted by its challenges. These 200 are those people.

**Luke Feltham**  
Editor-in-chief

## Mail & Guardian 200 YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS

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## How we choose the 200 Young South Africans

You will not find conventional celebrities among the *Mail & Guardian's* 200 Young South Africans. Our criteria are wide and include individual accomplishments with a matching ability to take a leading role in the nominee's field, peer and public recognition and a willingness to give back to society. At the beginning of every year, we open up the nominations process to the public through the website [mg.co.za/200youngsouthafricans](https://mg.co.za/200youngsouthafricans). This year

we received about 4 000 nominations from the public. Once nominations close, we go through the list thoroughly and shortlist potential finalists for each category based on the nominees' motivations. The finalists are sent questions and the profiles are written based on their answers and the motivation. Keep your ears to the ground and eyes open for the new crop of upcoming talent in the class of 2025 and be sure to nominate them.



Scan this QR code with your phone. It will take you to the main page of our special online 200 Young South Africans feature. The QR codes with all the winners will take you to their longer profiles covering their talents, careers and achievements.

## In partnership with



## INDEX



Agriculture 6



Financial services 34



Arts & entertainment 8 & 9



Governance 38 & 39



Business 10 & 11



Health & wellness 41 & 42



Civil society 13 to 15



Legal services 44 & 45



Climate change & environment 17



Mining & manufacturing 47



Education 19 to 21



Sport 48



Energy 23



Technology & innovation 51 & 52



Entrepreneurship 25 & 26



Tourism & hospitality 53



Film & media 30 & 31



Editor's choice 55





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# —AGRO— ENERGY FUND (AEF)



## About the programme

The AEF is a blended finance programme, established in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) to provide funding support for the acquisition of alternative energy assets to alleviate the impact of loadshedding on farming operations and the agricultural sector. The fund will focus on financing energy intensive agricultural activities which include irrigation, intensive agricultural production systems and onfarm cold chain related activities.

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# AGRO ENERGY FUND (AEF)

## SECTOR FOCUS

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- Poultry and Piggeries;
- All irrigated commodities; and
- On-farm processing.

*\*\*Commodity list is not exhaustive, to be guided by internal assessment at Land Bank.*

## QUALIFYING CRITERIA

- South African citizens with a valid ID (must be 18 years and above) and/or registered business entity;
- Applicant must be applying to implement an energy efficiency project or to implement a project that offsets electricity from the grid through self-use renewable energy;
- The Applicant must be operating an agricultural business at the primary or secondary level;
- Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to utilize the energy requirements applied for;
- Smallholder, medium-scale, large-scale and mega commercial producers operating in the agricultural sector;
- Producers involved in energy-intensive farming enterprises including on-farm cold chain related activities;
- Proof of land ownership or proof of access to land (Lease tenure must be aligned to the term of the loan at the minimum);
- Only one application per entity or applicant will be considered; and
- No debt takeovers; debt settlements or refinancing.

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# 200 Young South Africans 2024

## AGRICULTURE

### Alina Dimakatso Ntsiapane

Intern in agronomy

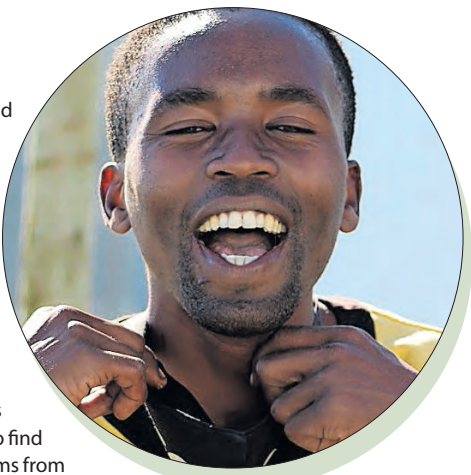
Some believe that South Africa's youth are apathetic, but Alina Dimakatso Ntsiapane, 28, is not one of them. She says they are taking driving entrepreneurship across a variety of sectors, and harnessing their creative energy is vital. Alina is excited about the growing emphasis on inclusive agricultural development in which smallholder farmers, especially women and youth, are empowered with knowledge, resources and access to markets. Her work for the International Fund for Agricultural Development is about promoting pro-poor agricultural efficiency and producing research outputs to inform evidence-based policymaking, which she is well equipped to do: she has four degrees in agriculture behind her name. Her victories in international competitions means she is able to leverage her credibility to help secure funding for initiatives that empower small farmers, who she teaches techniques that help to improve their yields. To date, she has trained more than 450 farmers. She has her own YouTube channel that promotes agricultural efficiency. Alina is optimistic about the future of food production, because there are many advancements in biotechnology and precision agriculture will optimise resource use and mitigate the effects of climate change.



### Ludwe Qamata

Gardener (Earth artist)

Ludwe Qamata, 35, lives in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, and became known as the "Ghetto Gardener" because of his hard work in community gardens. He is a full-time volunteer at a home for senior citizens, the Sinovuyo Old Age Group. He describes himself as an Earth artist, and says that growing nutritious food for seniors is his passion. He also teaches schoolchildren, residents in Khayelitsha and older people how to grow vegetables and make their own compost in their backyards. But Ludwe has had to work hard to achieve this. He told the *Food for Mzansi* publication that he fell into "the madness in the streets" when he was a teenager. When he was released from a juvenile detention centre, he struggled to find work because of his record. His love for growing food stems from watching people gardening at a Shawco community centre. He then joined a nonprofit organisation that teaches people how to garden for and by themselves. It was from there that the so-called Ghetto Gardener bloomed. Ludwe not only grows food at Sinovuyo Old Age Group, he has also worked with schools, shelters and orphanages. He says the loving hearts of his community inspired him to be the man he is today.



### Masello Mokhorro

Founder, chief executive/operations manager

Masello Mokhorro, 25, dreamed of becoming a farmer but people discouraged her, saying it would not succeed. Instead, Masello started Starlicious Enterprises in Bultfontein in the Free State with just 50 chicks and four pigs in the family's backyard and on communal municipal land. After two years she had 100 chicks and more than 50 pigs. After knocking on multiple doors and pitching as to how the business is worthy and guaranteed to succeed, Masello was able to secure a lease for two hectares of land. She is responsible for running the entire business, including looking after the animals. She is responsible for placing orders for day-old chicks, feed, vaccinations and making payments. Additionally she manages the records of animal performance, sales, marketing and finances. Masello's success has been recognised; in 2022 she was selected as one of the Free State's top 50 most influential youth and the Graca Machel Foundation, Women Creating Wealth programme this year. Her achievements are inspired by her childhood. When her mother could not get work as a seasonal farm worker and the social grant was not enough, Masello began selling sweets and snacks at school. "This is what built the entrepreneurial spirit in me," she says.



### Lesego Makgoba

Farm technician and entrepreneur

Lesego Makgoba is the founder and manager of Nation Farming Solutions, a company she started during the Covid lockdown that specialises in agri-business consulting, hydroponic systems and shade nets. Her job involves designing customised hydroponic solutions, overseeing shade net construction, and supplying fresh produce to local franchises such as Boxer, Pick n Pay, and OBC. Lesego also manages Nation Rolling Paper, the sister company to the farm and a brand she founded that produces premium rolling papers and is now a vendor for 100 Pick n Pay stores nationwide. The 30-year-old's responsibilities include marketing and managing the distribution of products. Lesego also runs a nonprofit organisation dedicated to integrating indigenous knowledge systems with modern farming techniques to empower local communities. Lesego could not secure a job after completing her honours degree in economics, so she started selling firewood from debushing her family's farm. Another challenge was having to teach herself complex agricultural systems, which did through research and experimenting. Her role models include her aunt who taught her financial discipline and her uncle who taught the value of continuous learning.



### Hlobisile Bathabile Yende

Director

Hlobisile Bathabile Yende is the director of The Yende and Partners, and her job is to manage the daily business operations, mentor full-time female trainees on their farm, Nooitgedacht in the Heidelberg area of Gauteng, and oversee marketing to ensure strong brand positioning. She also looks for new business opportunities. To ensure their clients' needs are met, Hlobisile supervises the quality control manager. Her top accomplishment is introducing a third dry land crop, butternuts, which secured contracts with two major retailers. Innovative farming techniques and efficient water management practices had to be implemented to ensure the crop's success. The 28-year-old's other achievement is obtaining accreditation for their student programme, which involves mentoring female trainees in agriculture. Additionally, Hlobisile has produced an agricultural book for children, which she says taught her "the importance of early education and the effect of storytelling in inspiring the next generation of farmers". She says her achievements are inspired by a desire to practise sustainable agriculture, the drive to empower women in the agricultural sector and the importance of encouraging the next generation of farmers.



### Andile Mkhize

Agri-business facilitator

Andile Mkhize is an agri-business facilitator with the Touted Agriculture College South Africa and travels around the country to train farmers, particularly small-scale farmers who are often overlooked for training opportunities. His work involves teaching them about effective farming practices and introducing them to technological tools that can enhance their productivity and growth. Andile says he aims to empower these farmers with the knowledge and resources needed to improve their operations, promote sustainability and ensure their economic viability. His work also entails a learnership in plant production for 22 people. The 26-year-old developed his love of agriculture during his youth, having grown up in a farming family in Melmoth. Andile is proud of having been chosen as one of Africa's Top 100 Brightest Young Minds in 2022. Another highlight for him is his involvement in the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation mentorship programme implemented in the Sustainable Business in Animal Health Service Provision through Training for Veterinary Paraprofessionals initiative. Andile says his biggest challenge was doubting himself. But he overcame this by setting small, achievable goals.



### Dimpho Xaba

Farmer and lecturer

Dimpho Xaba is a lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), where he develops learning materials and teaches vegetable crop production. He also develops materials for short courses. After leaving school he completed his diploma and then BTech in agricultural extension and rural development. Dimpho says Douglas Mfola is an important person in his life, particularly while he was doing his practicals at the TUT farm and then when he did his master's in agricultural science. "He became like a real father to me." Dimpho, 33, is not only a lecturer, he is a farmer and developed his love for farming when he was a boy growing up near Brits in North West. He established the Thusanang Bakone Group and now farms wheat, maize, soya, potatoes and bees. Dimpho is also involved with the Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development, which promotes the involvement of young people in agriculture. He also advises small-scale farmers. A specific achievement Dimpho is proud of is raising funds for undergraduates' and postgraduates' bursaries, as well as for students doing the work integrated learning programme. In his first year at TUT, Dimpho struggled to pay for his fees and this experience inspired him to assist other students.



### Luvo Gugwana

Chief executive and founder

Luvo Gugwana, 29, founded and leads the Green Arch Innovations company in pioneering sustainable solutions in the agricultural sector. His company is an aquaponics micro-franchise that focuses on creating franchises for low-income communities to promote sustainable agriculture, enhance food security and support local economies. He told *Farmers' Weekly* that aquaponics "offers supportive and collaborative methods of vegetable and fish production and can grow substantial amounts of food in locations and situations where soil-based agriculture is difficult or impossible". His job encompasses strategic planning, business development and overseeing operations. Luvo, who has a qualification in medical orthotics and prosthetics, spearheads the development of climate-smart technologies and practices, fostering collaborations with universities, communities and industry stakeholders. His job includes driving innovation, research and product development. Among his challenges was gaining community buy-in for new agricultural practices. He addressed this by fostering relationships with people, demonstrating the benefits of climate-smart gardening, and incorporating indigenous knowledge systems.





# Y

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# FIND YOUR FREQUENCY







200 Young South Africans 2024

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



## Ameera Conrad

Associate artistic director

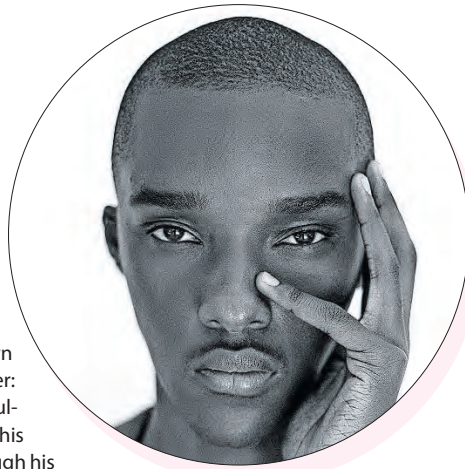
One of our oldest traditions is telling stories, and one of the best ways to bring them to life is through theatre. Ameera Conrad, 30, has found her purpose in this art form, and relocated to the United Kingdom to pursue it further. It's been a tough ride at times, but she has support groups on both sides of the ocean, and she's committed to promoting South Africa in English theatre. That's because she believes that our country is a global leader in many ways, and the world is hungry for our stories. Ameera was able to work on the international stage because of a theatre piece called *The Fall* that she worked on about the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements. As a student, she drew on personal experience when she co-wrote it, and it received much acclaim. She strives to promote the voices of black African women in a space that still has strong elements of racism and patriarchy. She does this through her organisation, 20 Stories High, where she is the creative leader. Her job entails not only writing, directing and performing in theatres across the UK, but also helping to create development programmes for the youth and underrepresented artists.



## Aphile Carter

International high fashion model

The first time that Aphile Carter, 22, did a casting for Paris Fashion Week, he got a gig with Yves Saint Laurent. He ended up doing a shoot with the prestigious brand in Venice for its Spring/Summer Collection fashion show. It was a dream come true for the young high fashion model, and reminded him that your highest aspirations can be reached, no matter where you come from. Aphile hails from Lenasia, an area renowned for crime and gangs, but then, so does Liesl Laurie-Mthombeni, who won the Miss South Africa crown in 2015. This changed the trajectory of Aphile's life forever: if she could reach for the stars, then so could he. Being bullied was a big part of Aphile's youth, which took a toll on his self-confidence, but he was able to heal his trauma through his career choice. Being a high fashion model is no bed of roses, however, and he's had to learn to grow a thick skin to keep his morale high. He is inspired by the growth of local luxury brands such as Maxhosa, Rich Mnisi and Thebe Magugu, and says the high fashion industry is growing "in leaps and bounds".



## Billy Langa

Theatre maker and performance artist

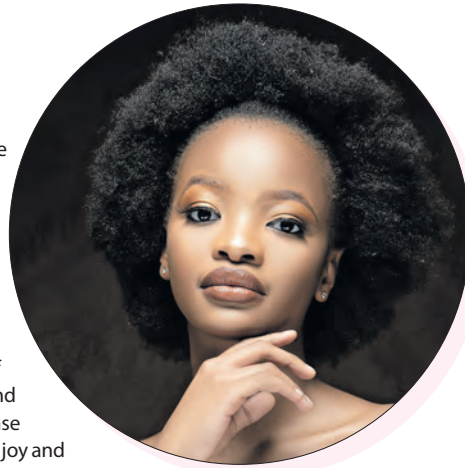
Being awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist of The Year For Theatre 2022 was one of the most memorable moments in the career of actor, playwright, director and educator Billy Langa, 35. He won the award for *Tswalo*, which he produced in collaboration with his friend, Mahlatsi Mokgonyana. The lesson he gained from the experience was that working with others can be of great benefit, especially for the audience. Billy is curious about the physicality of theatre, how it relates to the body and what it means both to those who perform it and those who witness it. He's also interested in the presence of language in theatre and how the sounds we make in our daily lives can be used in productions. Much of his art is inspired by inward introspection and his intuition. He believes that with increased private sector sponsorship, theatre will become more accessible for the masses, but in addition, the architecture and structure of venues should be inviting and welcoming for audiences. For his next project, he's helping to produce a play called *Mehlala* in conjunction with The Market Theatre Laboratory, which looks back at South Africa's 30 years of democracy.



## Botlhale Boikanyo

Poet, actress, speaker, social activist

Award-winning poet, actress, speaker and presenter Botlhale Boikanyo came into the limelight at the age of 11, when she became the first poet and youngest winner of *SA's Got Talent* in 2012. But she says nothing could have prepared her for the price of fame, which included being trolled and bullied on social media: it took family grounding and much self-reflection to survive. Botlhale likes to combine her art with activism: she was a lead actress in the film *The Deal*, which examines the issues associated with gender-based violence and the effects of poverty. She believes that the arts elevate our thinking and how we engage with each other, and help us to make sense of difficult subjects such as trauma and politics, as well as joy and ritual. To this end she founded the Botlhale Boikanyo Foundation, focusing on youth development and arts education. She was proud of being part of The Legacy of Hope Foundation, which raises funds for the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital. She performed her tribute to Madiba in New York and was named as an ambassador of the foundation. The experience taught her that being of service to others is her calling, as an artist, a civic leader and a changemaker.



## Dalin Oliver

Comedian, sports broadcaster, actor, podcaster

Dalin Oliver, 35, just completed a five-city tour of Australia, where his show won a Best Weekly Comedy Award at the Fringe World Festival in Perth — one of the world's biggest Fringe Festivals. Dalin is preparing for his next solo comedy stint in six countries and 14 cities in England, Ireland, The Netherlands, Germany, France and Spain. It's self-managed, -produced and -funded. Dalin has previously starred in the South African action-comedy movie *Finders Keepers*, which aired in cinemas nationwide, and also hosted numerous online shows including *Late Tackle* with the Springboks. He has worked as a master of ceremonies at events including the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, ICC Men's U19 Cricket World Cup, Netball World Cup and the SA20. Dalin says his comedy is inspired by his experiences as a South African. "Having worked across the country and performed for audiences from all backgrounds and walks of life, I've learned the power and beauty of comedy in allowing people to find humour in the best and toughest of times. We are South Africans. We love laughing and find the funny in any situation. My job is to find the funny in every possible situation and bring laughter to the Mzansi and the world."



## Elroy Fillis-Bell

Chief executive

As the chief executive of Joburg Ballet, 34-year-old Elroy Fillis-Bell has a lot on his plate, overseeing everything from its finances to its development programmes to staff well-being, but it's his desire to leave the organisation in a better position for the next generation that keeps him motivated. He has learned how to create a working team culture by carefully observing the way others do things and focusing on mutual respect when dealing with his colleagues. He is filled with pride when thinking back on collaborating with the hard-working team to stabilise the Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria in the period just after the Covid pandemic. Together they were able to steady the organisation in a period of great uncertainty, partly by experimenting with building new and strong revenue streams. He is excited that a number of arts institutions are now learning to adequately articulate the value proposition of their work, instead of approaching sponsors with a cap-in-hand begging approach, which is far more sustainable. Elroy says that the youth have no option but to take up the reins in running every aspect of South Africa — from politics to social development to artistic innovation — and be the change they want to see in this world.



## Johnny Malepa

Creative director and art director

It is fortunate indeed that Johnny Malepa dropped out of university, where he was studying IT, because his career change has since rocketed him as close to what creative directors could call "stardom". He's worked with top names in the film and music industries — the list includes giants such as Netflix, Marvel and Disney — and he's collaborated closely with AKA and Kanye West, who also happen to be his mentors. He's won an astounding number of platinum certifications and dozens of awards, including multiple Grammys. All of this in seven years: Johnny is just 24. He's particularly proud of coordinating *Orchestra on the Square*, a project that was "one of Africa's most substantial rollouts" and which "redefined what is possible in the entertainment and corporate worlds". It took a huge amount of collaboration and pushed the boundaries of everyone involved, including Johnny, who thrives on challenges. He's faced hardships and setbacks in his career, including depression and falling into debt, but he got back on to his feet, and said the experience made him stronger. He's optimistic about the future of creativity in Africa and globally, because new technologies abound — and it's the youth who know best how to use them.



## Kamogelo Walaza

Independent curator

Kamogelo Walaza, 31, is an independent curator. She works with diverse artists, finding spaces to hold exhibitions, submits project proposals and raises funds for them. She organises exhibitions in collaboration with various institutions and artists, in both traditional and alternative spaces. One of her proudest achievements is the first exhibition she curated, titled *Senses*, which was part of the Young Curators Incubator programme, an initiative of the Goethe-Institut and UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Arts. She invited diverse art practitioners to participate. "Collaborating with practitioners from different backgrounds can ignite fresh ideas and inspire innovative approaches," Kamogelo says. One of her greatest challenges is finding funding for her work as a curator. She says this has improved because she has nurtured relationships in the industry and has done credible work. Kamogelo, who is studying towards a Master of Arts in Fine Arts degree and has been awarded a Nirox Residency, urges young creatives to find their artistic voices. "We all have unique ways of working and being. Take your time to get to know your artistic voice. Once you find it, build it, so that you can assert your voice in the industry," she says.







200 Young South Africans 2024

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



### Kwazikwenkosi Ntombela-Langa

Executive director, film writer and director

**K**wazikwenkosi Ntombela-Langa, 29, is the executive director at Divine Voice Media and a film writer and director. As executive director, she creates proposals to apply for government grants to develop and produce films and develops and produces projects that are funded. Kwazikwenkosi has written three films and directed two films. She is currently working towards finalising her third film. In her film project titled *Slow Fruit*, she wrote and directed the coming-of-age drama that looks to unpack themes of awakening, friendships, virginity and growth. This film shaped her as a writer and executive director responsible for making decisions on the production of films. Kwazikwenkosi holds a bachelor of education from the University of Zululand and is currently in her second year of a diploma in media practices from Boston Media House. She is also currently a writer for a micro budget film funded by the KZN Film and the National Film and Video Foundation under the department of sport, arts and culture. Looking ahead, Kwazikwenkosi envisions a blockbuster movie by a production company from rural areas, where young people can be trained and employed in different fields of filmmaking.



### Nhlanhla Ngqaqu

Artist, musician and healer

**N**hlanhla Ngqaqu, 35, is on a spiritual quest to enlighten and heal through his music, as well as to raise people's awareness. Almost a decade ago he had a dream of an "Afrika" that was filled with love and justice, and formed the Africanist jazz ensemble iPhupho L'ka Biko to fulfil it. This dream has since been shared with many people and in many spaces; live shows bring audiences together in healing and love as well as in history and revolution. The band fuses jazz and gospel with the indigenous African genres of imvumane and igwijo. iPhupho L'ka Biko explores themes such as ritual, culture, origins, race and displacement. The band has released two singles, a compilation album called *Indaba Is* and an EP, which are doing well on streaming platforms and won them the Standard Bank Gold Ovation award. Nhlanhla is inspired by his family members and black people "who are resilient in the struggle against systematic oppression". He says that instead of dwelling on problems, he rather focuses on creating, healing and inspiring. He takes part in the weekly Amanzi sessions that fight against alcohol addiction, a problem in the townships responsible for a cycle of violence, trauma and abuse, in which many youths are trapped.



### Lynn Daphne Rudolph

Sound artist

**T**rained as a classical musician since the age of four, viola player Lynn Daphne Rudolph, 28, has spent many years both drawing on this Eurocentric background and developing it in her own way to find her own voice. She is drawn to sound as a means of protest, to transmute the injustices of colonialism and apartheid into healing. One of the ways she does this is through improvisation, which goes beyond the limitations of conditioned beliefs; another is through exploring softness as resistance. On her debut solo project *Homegrown Immigrant*, she was responsible for all aspects of production, from music direction to marketing the final product. The 2022 project was an exploration of what sound means to her on a personal level, and tells her story as a queer, coloured South African woman. This year she will be doing a residency at the Festival d'Aix en Provence and will be principal viola for the Mzansi Philharmonic Orchestra at its Carnegie Hall debut in New York. Daphne is excited about what she believes is a significant shift in younger musicians exploring and developing their own voices as artists in the classical industry, and believes that "the South African voice" is beginning to distinctly establish itself in this sector.



### Mduduzi Vincent Nhlapo

Associate artistic director

**W**hen he was in high school, Mduduzi Vincent Nhlapo, 33, was told by his principal about Aubrey Sekhabi, director of the South African State Theatre, also known as "The Great". Equipped with a vision, Mduduzi worked himself to the bone to be like this man. He is now the assistant director of the same theatre, where he works alongside the person he looks up to — some dreams do actually come true. He worked so hard, juggling academics with the professional space, that he recently realised that he was suffering from "the monster of career fatigue". To rekindle his energy, he's embarked on a new path that includes getting enough exercise, sleep and meeting new people. He's also earned to "trust the process" rather than being solely focused on achieving results. The multi-award-winning playwright, choreographer and director believes that theatre should be used for social regeneration. Part of his responsibilities is developing community outreach programmes, and he's working on promoting street theatre in the townships to preserve heritage, create jobs and foster awareness of theatre. He sees theatre as an instrument that can heal our social ills, while simultaneously fulfilling the role of entertainment.



### Robot Boii

Performer

**M**zwakhe Mbuli, 32, known by his stage name, Robot Boii, is a performer. He is well known for being the presenter of the Lockdown House Party and won the 2023 Trace Africa Award for Best Dancer in Africa. The young artist has called his accomplishments "surreal" and added that he will continue working to inspire the next generation of artists to not fall into stereotypes faced by young men. Robot was a graphic student before he discovered his passion for music and production and soon became a talent in the South African music industry. Some of his hits include *Salary Salary*, *Uxolo* and *Mwagia Ndani Read* through which he has captivated his audiences with his performances and infectious beats. Because of his growing social media presence, he was recently launched as the new face of the fragrance brand Axe. Robot has been challenged by limited resources but he does not allow it to hinder his progress. With inspiration from DJ Sbu, Zoya 7 and his father, Mzwakhe Mbuli, a prominent figure in South Africa's cultural landscape, Robot wishes to create a legacy in the entertainment industry on his own.



### Kwazi Ndlangisa

Poet and author

**T**he stereotype of the "struggling poet" doesn't sit well with Kwazi Ndlangisa, 24. As the founder and director of IKhambi Writers Hub, a nonprofit that runs art projects to preserve indigenous languages and develop the youth, he has managed to provide employment opportunities and promote poetry, writing and various other art forms. His debut live event in 2016 was backed up by local music giants such as Mabi Thobejane and Madala Kunene, who inspired him to start doing poetry together with music. He taught himself how to promote his events, and, by inviting government officials and dignitaries from social development organisations, began to get bookings for more shows. These days IKhambi gets funding from the National Arts Council and the department of arts and culture, but Kwazi says he had to dig deep, improve his skills and learn to collaborate to achieve this. Kwazi sees the youth as the "key driver of positive change". His organisation is passing on skills in poetry through a mentorship initiative called the Loba Mentorship Programme. He believes that in a decade the poetry industry in South Africa will be "well oiled", with support from big companies and poets sustaining themselves on their art.



### Pieter Odendaal

Writer, producer, senior lecturer in creative writing

**P**ieter Odendaal, 35, is a writer, producer and senior lecturer in creative writing at North-West University. Pieter's heart beats for poetry and the different expressions and messages it holds. His written texts explore various themes including the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, climate, society, identity politics and mental health. In his career, he has bagged four qualifications, which include a PhD in creative writing, MPhil and postgraduate diploma in sustainable development planning and management, and a BA in language and culture. He also published five books. Among all his literary interests, poetry stands out the most for Pieter, who says he is interested in collaborative writing practice and using spoken word poetry as a vehicle for social-ecological change. He started the BUA! Poetry initiative to renew spoken word events at his university, on which he continues to expand. He previously led another poetry project called InZync Poetry at Stellenbosch University, which sought to promote multilingual spoken word platforms in the Cape Town area. As a queer person, Pieter says he learnt how to curate visibility through performance but helping the youth hone in on their creativity and writing is what truly makes him feel alive.



**'The arts have been served by alternative institutions primarily because the state has never been interested in using schooling to promote creativity.'**

Es'kia Mphahlele, writer, educationist, artist and activist





Komani Dhlamini  
Director

**K**omani Dhlamini, 31, owns and runs Completeman Building Solutions, which offers a unique and innovative service called the Handyman Plan. With a monthly subscription clients receive dedicated handyman hours, ensuring reliable and professional maintenance and repair services to their homes and businesses. As the owner, Komani manages the daily operations, focusing on delivering exceptional service and expanding the client base. The company's mission is to simplify property maintenance through a convenient and cost-effective solution, enabling clients to have peace of mind knowing that their property needs are in good hands. Komani says an achievement he is proud of is the way the business is growing. In November 2023, the product was launched in KwaZulu-Natal and this has been a success, generating just over 10 subscriptions a month. Now he is seeking investment to further grow the business and enhance its offerings. Komani says it has not been an easy journey, particularly in the beginning when he started the venture, about which he did not know much. But he overcame this by "constantly feeding yourself positive thoughts". Komani's hope is that Completeman Building Solutions can open a training academy where young people can learn these skills and work for themselves.



Kevin Ssemwogerere  
Senior vice-president

**K**evin Ssemwogerere, 34, is the senior vice-president at the Standard Bank Group. He is the head of investment banking ventures in the investment banking global division of Standard Bank. His mandate is to evolve the investment banking client value propositions through corporate venturing, digital innovation, strategic investments and building new business products and services. His function involves executive, administrative, strategic, operational and business development responsibilities. He is currently driving product and service developments in the investment banking division, which includes servicing clients through modernised interactions enabled by tools such as AI, digital assets and data insights. He believes that companies will benefit from the transformation of investment banking into a more data-driven sector offering products and services. Kevin is also the co-founder and former team member of a digital platform business called PowerPulse, which assists corporate and industrial companies in their solar installation procurement requirements. This solution was awarded the CIB Mark of Excellence award in March 2023 for being the most progressive innovative project with record-breaking progress in less than a year.



Joy Banele Gemma Sibanyoni  
Operations and people executive director

**J**oy Banele Gemma Sibanyoni, 32, made a number of choices in her life that went against the grain of her peers. It took courage to do so, and it was lonely at times, but in the end she learned how to overcome comparing herself with others. One choice she made must have seemed really crazy: she left working for a top multinational organisation and went to do community work in the small town of Mossel Bay. But then she believes that her purpose is to make a positive difference wherever she goes. Joy works as an operations and people executive director at Pawa Africa Pty Ltd, where she heads up All4Youth Sub-Saharan Africa, which assists in creating and implementing employability programmes, mentorship and training initiatives that equip the youth with workplace skills. Her work with the AFAWA FundHER project involves investing in women entrepreneurs in South Africa, providing financial tools and support for their small and medium-sized businesses. Joy says that more and more young people are starting up their own businesses. The future is exciting for her, as South African youth are no longer waiting for opportunities to come to them, but are pursuing ventures that support themselves and others.



Lebogang Thobakgale  
Financial crime assurance manager, NEC member for Absip

**L**ebogang Thobakgale, 34, is extremely self-motivated. She believes nobody should wait for a seat at any table — rather create that seat for yourself. She is also intentional and meticulous in her dealings with people and her work, which benefits her career choice. She's a financial crime assurance manager for Absa and an NEC member for the Association of Black Securities and Investment Professionals (Absip). As an auditor, Lebogang has become increasingly involved in monitoring, but she also teaches. She helps financial services with their learning and development strategies, and has passed on her knowledge about financial crime compliance on a number of platforms such as Tshwane FM. She's hosted a conference on digital assets and sanctions compliance and has had discussions with the finance minister and the treasury; some of her insights on greylisting were mentioned in the budget speech. Lebogang says that compliance, like many other fields, is becoming increasingly technologically driven, and that we are all affected by financial crimes. Lebogang advocates for a proactive approach to curb risks, through data optimisation and preempting situations, and says she has to stay on her toes because the field is changing so fast.



Harry Scherzer  
Co-founder and chief executive

**H**arry Scherzer, 31, co-founded Future Forex in 2020, and with his business partner has grown the company to a team of more than 70 professionals across the country. As chief executive, he leads Future Forex's growth, business development and strategic direction, while building relationships with clients and partners. He is particularly proud of the success of Future Forex's crypto arbitrage investment product, which has processed more than R25 billion, resulting in about R290 million earned by clients. One of the Future Forex initiatives Harry is excited about is its online forex platform. "This project is a culmination of extensive research, design and development, aimed at enhancing the way businesses and individuals transfer money into and out of South Africa," he says. He aims to develop new products and solutions that not only advance the financial services industry, but enhance transparency, efficiency and service delivery. The youth are the future leaders and workforce, so Harry believes investing in their education, skills development and entrepreneurial aspirations is vital to boost economic empowerment and sustainable development.



Inam Qoma  
Chief executive and co-owner

**A**t 33, Inam Qoma is the chief executive and co-owner of Rothko Brand Partners. Her job involves helping people and organisations achieve business goals through strategic content marketing. She oversees the strategy, creation and execution of tailored campaigns across diverse industries, including education, sustainability, finance and research. She uses her experience in strategic communications to help business-to-consumer and business-to-business entities, as well as corporates and nonprofits, achieve their objectives. She also drives Rothko's commitment to social responsibility and inclusivity, championing young Africans. One achievement Inam is most proud of is approaching the founder of Rothko Brand Partners about becoming a shareholder at just 26 years old. "The lessons I learned are the importance of backing yourself, being proactive about creating opportunities and not being afraid to take calculated risks. Building on that, I'm proud to have stepped up as CEO in March 2024 at the age of 33." She believes the youth will play a pivotal role in shaping South Africa's future: "With the right support and resources, the youth can spark meaningful dialogue and unite the nation in envisioning an equitable, prosperous future."



Heinrich de Lange  
Founder and chief executive

**H**einrich de Lang, 28, is the founder and chief executive of Octoco, which assists companies in technical decision-making. His job involves collaboration with its internal product and engineering teams, as well as its clients' technical teams, to provide guidance on strategic and business decisions, technology selection, architecture and design. The projects range from software development to embedded electronics and internet of things products. "I thrive on turning people's ideas into reality and solving complex problems that address real-world issues," he says. As a young engineering graduate one of the challenges he has encountered is dealing with older professionals because there is often a perception that, because you are young, you don't deserve the same level of respect as someone with more years of experience. "I have overcome this challenge by persisting and building trust. By consistently proving that my team and I are highly competent, despite our age, we have earned the respect we deserve." Octoco is collaborating with corporate South Africa to establish an incubator to support start-ups and entrepreneurs to develop technology-driven, market-fit products and bring them to market.



Joe Mushwana  
Sales and business development manager

**C**ompleting his MBA at the age of 29 was something that Joe Mushwana promised his greatest role model and motivator he would do. She happens to be his mother. While he racked up three degrees, he worked his way up to his current position as head of Barloworld Equipment's sale and business development, where he and his team are building and maintaining the company's financial wellbeing. Joe says that artificial intelligence has transformed the mining industry, and will continue to increasingly do so in all of its key areas — from exploration to extraction and processing. For example, it is enabling drilling and blasting operations that don't require human supervision on a continuous basis, which increases productivity and reduces the risk of injuries. He says that public-private collaborations, especially those that foster entrepreneurship, are essential for combating youth unemployment. Companies that hire young people and develop them not only build a secure and sustainable future workforce, they also help to grow the talent pipeline and the local economy. Joe, who encountered many obstacles along his own path to corporate success, is registering an NGO to help disadvantaged children.







# 200 Young South Africans 2024 BUSINESS



Nikitha Gcelu  
Head of Vitality Africa

As the head of Vitality Africa, there's a lot on the plate of Nikitha Gcelu, 30, as he has to build the health insurance business in Africa across seven countries, each with varying levels of access to healthcare and financial services. He says Africa is going through a disease profile shift: there's an increase in non-communicable diseases, as more and more people develop health conditions because of their lifestyle. Nikitha is helping to design programmes that meet the needs of the African consumer. Some of the Vitality initiatives include making health screening more accessible, destigmatising HIV and mental health issues, and forming partnerships that help eradicate malaria. One partnership is with Goodbye Malaria; together they are raising millions towards spraying homes to kill mosquitoes. To get to his current position, Nikitha had to pivot more than once. He started on an accounting path, found it boring, then used his savings to study management, and became an executive associate. Finally, after seeking out more business-focused initiatives, he became a "perfect generalist" who is executing on a wide range of projects.



Gift Pule  
Private equity principal

Preparation gets you through half the battle, and perseverance gets you through the rest. This motto has sustained Gift Pule, 32, through his career, especially when he decided to change his career from medical research to finance and asset management. Part of that pivot involved being prepared to be the least knowledgeable person in the room, but in the end his perseverance paid off. His job as a private equity principal at Sanlam Private Equity involves investing in well-established mid-market companies, with the ability to influence the decisions and processes of these businesses towards realising their full potential. For example, after investing in SkipWaste, Gauteng's largest waste logistics business was able to increase its waste diversification from below 30% to 50% in just three years, preventing 100 000 tonnes of waste going into landfills. Gift is driven by his commitment to be effective through the work he and his company do. It drives change, creates jobs and improves employment quality. In the past four years, he helped put R1.5 billion in equity risk capital into medium-sized local businesses, sustaining jobs in several sectors and growing them in others, generating returns for his investors.



Jacques Jordaan  
Co-founder and chief executive

Jacques Jordaan, 27, is the co-founder and chief executive of Specno, a venture builder that helps start-ups and large enterprises with digital solutions. He is responsible for the overall management and decision-making. His primary role is to set the strategic direction and long-term goals of the company. He also assists in the development and implementation of business plans, budgets and policies. Jacques is the public face of the company and takes the lead in all negotiations. He says he's most proud of two achievements: that the company has helped create many jobs and that the solutions they have built for clients have improved millions of lives. He gives the example of their work with Wardworx, a free task management app. Specno built the technology behind the app and now thousands of doctors can improve patient care in hospitals. But it was the pandemic that was the real game-changer. The company faced closure within six weeks and it was decided that all employees should be consulted. As a result the company kept its doors open. Jacques says he learnt it was invaluable to keep the team involved and to allow people to make decisions and implement their plans, as it breeds ownership in the company.



Prudence Ramotso  
Founder and chief executive

Prudence Ramotso, 32, is the founder and chief executive of Prudent Fashion, a store that specialises in footwear and sunglasses. Prudence started the business in 2019, after resigning from her job as a telesales marketer, because of her love for heels. She makes the decisions regarding designs she wants to bring to the store, manages stock, arranges deliveries to clients and deals with suppliers. Prudence also arranges collaborations and draft proposals, attends interviews and is involved in marketing to get the brand out there. She also arranges photo shoots and pop-up stores. Prudence says she has always loved heels because they gave her confidence. She was inspired to start her business by a teenage memory: she had to wear school shoes when she won Miss Festive at the age of 15, because her parents couldn't afford to buy her heels. A proud moment for Prudence was when she won the Female Founders Initiative Global 2022 female-owned retail brand of the year award. And in 2023 she came in the top four in the best footwear category in the Youth Owned Brands awards. Prudence's interest extends beyond heels; she is the co-founder of an NGO that provides underprivileged children with food and clothes.



## ON THE COVER

Artist Sizwe Khoza, who created the work of art on the cover of this edition of 200 Young South Africans, draws inspiration from his background, the people he meets and his life experiences to create works that resonate with many.

Although he often finds inspiration in his daily life, Khoza returns to his roots to create his art.

"Mozambique is home," Sizwe reflects. "I came to South Africa in 1995, two years after the civil war in Mozambique. We moved to Soweto and then to Springs."

Despite his long residence in South Africa, Sizwe's work remains influenced by his Mozambican heritage.

"I go home to Mozambique to take pictures, sketch my surroundings and gather inspiration for my projects. That is part of my process," he says.

His other "home" is the Artist Proof Studio in Johannesburg, where he is a facilitator.

For many black children, pursuing a career in the arts can be a daunting topic to broach with parents who may not understand the appeal of such a path. Despite this, Khoza was determined to have a career in the arts.

While in matric, he worked at a tavern to earn money for fees to attend classes at the Artist Proof Studio in Johannesburg.

"People don't believe me when I tell them this story," Sizwe says. "Every Friday, after school, I would work at a tavern to earn transport money to go to Johannesburg and study. I was also selling sweets at school just to make money for my education."

His parents finally grasped the viability of an artistic career when they attended his first show. Since then, they have been supportive of his endeavours.



Sizwe has since built a successful career in the arts, and is a facilitator in printmaking for students at the Artist Proof Studio, the very institution that launched his artistic journey and later launching an independent solo career.

He had a residency at William Humphrey Art Gallery in Kimberley where he was mentored by the late Dumisani Mabaso.

"That mentorship really helped me to discover colour — I still believe I am not good with colour even though my work is colourful. After being introduced to colour by Dumisani Mabaso, I came back and created big works — it all worked out."

Even after spreading his wings as a solo artist, Sizwe never turned his back on the Artist Proof Studio.

"Artist Proof Studio opened up all the channels for me. It's the one place I always return to when I want to make prints. There is no place like home," he says.

Tracey Munungufhala, who manages the gallery at the Artist Proof Studio, affirms Khoza's sentiments. She notes that the studio has become a home for many artists.

Founded in 1991 by Kim Berman and Nhlanhla Xaba, who died in a fire in 2003, the studio was initially created as a place for artists to gather. Over the years, it has evolved into a professional space that has nurtured some of South Africa's best artists.

"We have an education department with three-year and four-year courses where students intern. Most who come here have no exposure to printmaking, so we emphasise storytelling while teaching technique," Tracey says.

She highlights the importance of the Artist Proof Studio in providing young artists, who might otherwise have no



exposure to the arts, with a place to belong and access the resources they need.

Having studied there herself and now managing the gallery, Tracey emphasises that, like Khoza, many artists view the studio as a place for growth and creativity.

At the studio, Sizwe found more than just a place to hone his skills; he found a community.

It provided the foundation he needed to build a successful career. Today, he not only creates his own art but also gives back to the same community by donating some of his works to be sold and the proceeds go to teach young people at the Artist Proof Studio.

His journey from Mozambique to South Africa, from a student to a teacher, is a testament to the power of determination, community and the transformative potential of art.

As Tracey puts it, "Artist Proof Studio is more than just a place to learn. It's a place where artists can grow beyond their wildest imagination." For Sizwe Khoza and many others, it is a place where dreams are nurtured, skills are developed and futures are forged.





# Mandelathon 2024

*our support transforms futures*  
**This Mandela Day, let's come together to fight child poverty! The alarming statistics show that 4.8 million children in South Africa live below the poverty line, and 62.1% face multidimensional poverty. It's time to act!**

Our goal this year is to raise **R1,000,000** to combat poverty in underprivileged communities across South Africa. Since launching our Nelson Mandela Day fundraising initiative (Mandelathon) on July 18, 2023, we've developed programs to reach children nationwide, providing them with essential support. However, we need your support to make this dream a reality. We are calling on businesses to join forces with us, amplifying our impact by matching employee donations. Together, we can create a significant difference in the lives of these young people that we serve. Your support is crucial in helping us reach more children and empower them to break free from the cycle of poverty.

**Time to join the cause!**  
**Here's how you can make a difference:**

DONATE  
TODAY



Level 1  
**R67**  
Your contribution ignites **hope**

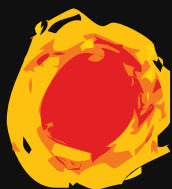


Level 2  
**R670**  
Your support transforms **futures**



Level 3  
**R6700**  
Your generosity creates **lasting impact**

Donate now



Nelson Mandela  
CHILDREN'S FUND

GONE BUT NOT  
*Forgotten*





200 Young South Africans 2024

# CIVIL SOCIETY



## Given Ndlela

Mental health counsellor and community worker

**G**iven Ndlela, 28, works at the South African Depression and Anxiety Group as a counsellor who offers one-on-one sessions to people suffering from mental health conditions. He is a qualified mental health counsellor and has been trained in helping people suffering from addiction and substance abuse. Given is very aware of the negative effects substance abuse has on communities and families. As a result, he goes to schools, churches and other organisations and teaches people about the different mental health conditions that can result from substance abuse and the other harmful effects of substance abuse. Given also focuses on working with men and what it means to be a man, because of the link with gender-based violence. He is involved in As'xoxe ndoda movement and the Boy Child Team. Given says he was born to find solutions to societal issues and is inspired by the vision he has for the change he wants to create in communities. He says his work is mostly inspired by what he sees around him; what people are going through and often don't have anyone to speak to and he believes that what he does — counselling and education — will bring positive change to their mindsets and attitudes.



## Latty Thlaka

Chief executive

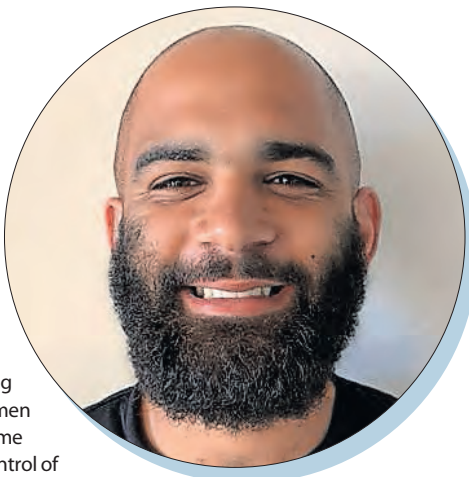
**L**atty Thlaka, 24, obtained her private pilot licence at the age of 18. She is the chief executive of NGOConnectSA where she manages a number of strategic and operational processes, including stakeholder engagement and fundraising to keep the organisation running smoothly. NGOConnectSA provides nonprofit organisations with skills, tools and resources to be better able to do their work. Latty says NGOConnectSA has worked with companies, government departments and community organisations. Her organisation's success is marked by its ongoing projects, some of which include daily blogs that share experiences of civil society, developing an innovative disaster management solution, working on a trust for community-based organisations in rural areas and on various youth development programmes. As she grows NGOConnectSA, Latty says she envisions a society where non-profits are more economically and financially sustainable, and where community-based organisations can have long-term effects on their beneficiaries. Latty is also a chairperson of the South African Internet Governance Forum, a globally recognised platform that deals with the internet governance space.



## Urshwin Engel

Programme lead

**U**rshwin Engel, 30, was raised in a community in Cape Town that was rife with gangsterism and gang violence, and it opened his eyes to its danger to society and the effect it has on men. He works as programme lead at an organisation called School of Hard Knocks where he mentors and leads NXTGENMEN, a programme that focuses on men's mental health and gender-based violence. Here he explores funding opportunities, facilitates programmes, trains other organisations and plans one-day tournaments for men on a monthly basis. Working on NXTGENMEN gives him the opportunity to work with men who have suffered grave difficulties. He says the programme offers men the opportunity to find their voice and take control of the narrative about men's character and role in society. Having grown up in a community with gang violence, Urshwin understands that people don't choose their conditions and often become a victim of their circumstances, and so when more opportunities are created, the better chance they have of making positive choices. He is also involved in Camp Joy, a restoration centre for men with a history of substance abuse and gangsterism, where he coaches a rugby club and teaches boys and men life skills.



## Tiiso Mahase

Director

**T**iiso Mahase, 32, is a director at Rainbow Unity Networks, where she oversees the Sisterhood Advocates project of the Hlanganisa Community Fund, an organisation that addresses gender-based violence and femicide, intimate partner violence and men as survivors of abuse. Tiiso is constantly challenged by trying to make the LGBTQI+ community more visible because she comes from a conservative community that is not ready to accept the queer community. She has organised and implemented pride events, and seeks to raise awareness about the difficulties the queer community faces. This includes the difficulties she faced as a young person, who was made to feel more different from others. Tiiso says it pushed her to show that her difference is not a disability and that she can still achieve a lot more than people they consider "normal". At the moment, she is working on an initiative that gives people access to the justice system and services. She says society still has a lot to learn about gender-based violence and the queer community's needs. Overall Tiiso hopes that South Africa will become a more inclusive, diverse and accepting society.



## Shanét le Grange

Operations manager and executive assistant

**S**hanét le Grange, 35, is an operations manager and executive assistant at JustShare. She is responsible for front office management, where she provides administrative and logistical support to the executive director and the team. JustShare is a shareholder activist organisation that advocates for a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable economy, and brings civil society together to hold corporations and government to account and create change for South Africa. The organisation seeks to create an inclusive, sustainable economy that prioritises social justice and the well-being of all. Shanét says her contribution to the company brings her satisfaction because it is an indication that she is helping the country's economy become stronger and sustainable. She is a keen learner and is motivated by the little changes she can make in her community and her work, and believes that everyone else can also make a difference through small means and gestures. Looking ahead, she says South Africa's youth have to upskill and bring fresh and new perspectives to old problems, and that if the country wants to move forward, it needs to include more young people in decision-making and policy setting to carve out a future that's more enabling for the youth themselves.



## Nadine de Mink

Civil technologist

**N**adine de Mink, 32, is a geometric design technologist at BVi Consulting Engineers. Her job entails creating engineering solutions to provide access to and improve the transportation systems for people and goods in rural and urban areas. She aims to develop an interconnected society to reach equity, efficiency, safety and sustainability. Nadine is completing a master's programme, something that she considers both a challenge and an achievement. She had to overcome initial fears of entering the programme and once she was accepted, she says she learned to trust herself and her capabilities. Nadine's career objectives are inspired by her desire to share knowledge with others. She is a member of the Women in the Built Environment programme and a volunteer committee member of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering project management and construction division and the Grow a University Pillar. She hopes to use her knowledge of engineering solutions to make real, infrastructural changes that help people. "The thing that excites me most about this is that I can make actual, positive contributions to society and at the same time I will be able to share my knowledge with young people, which will hopefully influence the industry in the future," she says.



## Mduduzi Ntongana

Programme officer: basic services

**M**duduzi Ntongana, 26, has always been involved in social development projects, and as the programme officer in basic services at Afesis, he works on projects that aim to improve the living conditions in informal settlements. A big part of his job is to look at sustainable human development, social justice and community development. He does this through policy shaping initiatives, working with government officials and NGOs, commenting on legislation, taking part in national and provincial human settlements discussions and advocating for issues through the media. Mduduzi was involved in the re-blocking pilot project for the electrification of informal settlements in Buffalo City metropolitan municipality, which he says was taught him the importance of community involvement and collaboration with government entities. Thanks to this project, Mduduzi was awarded second place in the SACPLAN Top Young Professional Planners for 2023. He is currently working on a number of projects, including developing sustainable livelihood plans for 19 informal settlements in Chris Hani district municipality, a heat-mapping campaign in Buffalo City metro and Project Vote SA to enhance the participation of young people.



## Thato Gaffane

Attorney

**T**hato Gaffane, 25, is a human rights lawyer who specialises in environmental and climate justice, business and human rights and gender equality. He works at Lawyers for Human Rights and offers free legal services to vulnerable and marginalised people. Thato has a master of laws degree in human rights law and his dissertation looked into the transgender community's right to access healthcare to ensure they are able to live with dignity and with acceptance in society. Thato's dissertation now forms the basis for a legal case that challenges the denial of gender affirming healthcare to a transgender client diagnosed with gender dysphoria. The case will be heard in the Johannesburg equality court. Thato says his personal experiences of belonging to a gender and sexual minority group and dealing with the hardships of discrimination motivates him. "The pain and discomfort that I experienced has motivated me to work towards creating a better world so that others don't face the adversity that I had to face," he says. The Constitution guides his fight for equality for others, and among other cases he is also involved in the development of a legally binding treaty at the United Nations level to regulate transnational corporations.







200 Young South Africans 2024

# CIVIL SOCIETY



## Selaelo Ramahlo

Co-founder and chief executive

**S**elaelo Ramahlo, 29, is the chief executive and co-founder of a community development and sustainability organisation, His Presence Foundation. Through this philanthropy, Selaelo mentors boys and girls in rural areas to equip them with skills for when they enter the workforce and the world at large. Selaelo says one of their initiatives at the foundation that they are most proud of is the Keep a School Child in School project, where they donated 100 pairs of school shoes and tracksuits to learners at one school, to ensure that the children in need can continue with their education. Selaelo is highly motivated when they see the positive effects of their efforts on the community and especially the youth, and believes they can bring light and change to dire situations. Selaelo is driven by issues that involve young people, and believes that the youth have the potential to shape South Africa's future by getting more involved in economic development processes in the country and ensuring that their work adds value to the development of South Africa. "The one thing that excites me about this is the fact that we will be able to engage more in economic development conversations in our country."



## Dumingu Vikunga

Founder and co-founder of organisations

**D**umingu Vikunga, 34, is the brain behind a number of civic organisations, each with their own purpose. At the SOS Children's Villages, his aim is to provide technology skills and training to children, so they have the opportunity to fare as well as other children who have the resources and opportunities. As a member of NetHope, he works other people to improve IT connectivity in humanitarian organisations in developing countries that have been hard hit by disasters. As the director of Gatvol Wear he gives local talents the opportunity to show their work on big platforms. He is also the co-founder of Real Men Rising, where they teach boys and men about the role they play in gender-based violence against women and girls. At the Precious Life Foundation, they raise funds to provide sanitary towels to girls in need. They have also organised blanket drives and donated food and stationary to families and children. Working across spaces that include bridging the digital divide and charity work, Dumingu says he has learnt about the effectiveness of collaboration and building relationships. "The value of kindness and compassion for others. That even modest donations have a remarkable power and can effect change."



## Rosemary Mokoena

Regulatory analyst, U-Turn Initiative co-founder

**R**osemary Mokoena, 31, has always been interested in economics and financial markets and this led her to pursuing a career in this field. She now works at the JSE as an analyst where she regulates listed companies on the stock exchange. This means she has to approve placing documents for new products and financial instruments issued on the debt market, and ensure that listed companies comply with the listing requirements at the JSE. Through her work, Rosemary seeks to steer the economy forward and develop the financial sector. Her life's greatest achievement was completing her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in accounting with a total of 17 distinctions. Rosemary never tires of learning, and plans to obtain an advanced Diploma in Financial Markets next. Although she lives in Johannesburg, she runs a nonprofit organisation called U-turn, a programme for children in her hometown in Limpopo. The initiative provides extramural activities to prevent young people from being led astray. She says her community has been marred by issues of teenage pregnancy and drug abuse, and her initiative is a way to keep young people on the right track.



## Basetsana Happy Pitso

Support facilitator

**S**outh Africa's youth are out there leading movements that address climate change, and Basetsana Happy Pitso, 25, is proudly among them. As a support facilitator for the African Climate Alliance, her organisational skills are pushed to the limit. Her tasks include helping to promote events and ensure that they run smoothly. In Basetsana's experience, involving the community is key, because when people have invested in projects and begin to see their benefits, then the projects become sustainable. She has seen the power of collective action in grassroots movements in Alexandra, where she comes from, and where she has helped to organise events. Basetsana has learned how to study while maintaining her activism. Beyond her work commitments, she is involved in youth coordinator leadership and gender equality change-makers programmes, which help her to develop her leadership skills. Knowing that she will leave behind a better world is what inspires her to excel. Basetsana sees a future where young people are involved in decision-making. She believes the world will be more equitable and sustainable because of advances in digital and information technology that will enable more youth to become active citizens.



## Seitebogo Peta

Founder and chief executive

**T**hirty-two-year-old Seitebogo Peta is the founder and chief executive of the Cleft Palate Foundation. "I literally and figuratively give children smiles for a living — I raise awareness and advocate for children born with cleft and craniofacial defects," she says. Describing herself as a "people and confidence builder", she helps those affected by the condition to get free and safe reconstructive surgery and post-surgery care. In addition, she gives educational and motivational talks to patients and their families and teaches the public on cleft and craniofacial defects. Seitebogo, who is studying towards a psychology degree, says part of what motivates her to succeed in her endeavours is setting a precedent of excellence — especially as a woman — for her daughter to follow. "To not only know, but to see and understand, that you must fight for your dreams and want to succeed in everything that you do," she says. Seitebogo would like people to be better educated about cleft and craniofacial defects, as it would mean that there would be fewer adult cases because people would get assistance from as early as birth. A maxim that inspires her is, "When I become excellent it won't be accidental — I will have laboured."



## Kenneth Mokgatlhe

Independent political writer and researcher

**K**enneth Mokgatlhe, 34, is a freelance journalist for a number of South African publications, but one of his greatest achievements was the tangible outcome of his journalism. He published a story in *The Citizen* about the plight of the Letebele family of seven who had been living off their grandparents' social grant. He was asked to help build a house for the family, and subsequently got the community involved in the project. He coordinated the entire project, and he says through that experience he learnt that people could initiate and institute any kind of change they want when they are committed. Despite financial hindrances in his academic career, Kenneth preserved. He is currently completing two degrees: one in education at Unisa and the other in African Studies at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. He says he is also in the process of registering a nonprofit organisation that will focus on environmental affairs. Kenneth considers himself a change-maker in the housing, education, cultural, entrepreneurship and environmental space and is motivated by the under-developed communities in South Africa, which he wants to improve. He hopes to pursue a PhD in political science or development studies.



**'A vibrant civil society can challenge those in power by documenting corruption or uncovering activities like the murder of political enemies. In democracies, this function is mostly performed by the media, NGOs or opposition parties.'**

Evgeny Morozov, a writer, researcher and intellectual from Belarus





200 Young South Africans 2024

## CIVIL SOCIETY



**Phumlani Sbonakaliso Myeza**  
Community facilitator

**P**humlani Sbonakaliso Myeza, 28, is a community facilitator who works both at community organisations and for the South African SDI Alliance. The alliance has four core members: FEDUP, a women-led, member-based social movement that organises through savings collectives and practices; the Informal Settlement Network, a network of poor communities that collaborate around issues such as landlessness, homelessness and exclusion; the Community Organisation Resource Centre, a non-profit that supports landless and homeless communities; and the uTshani Fund, a bridging finance institution that manages the urban poor fund and housing projects on behalf of FEDUP. Phumlani is the Durban North region's community facilitator, who helps to create platforms with municipality officials so that communities can engage with them about problems with the failure to deliver basic services. Through his work Phumlani has been able to influence bylaws and policies at municipal level. His aim is to make informal communities self-reliant and help to spearhead change that leads to a clean, healthy future environment. The greatest challenge that he faced was during the 2021 floods that devastated KwaZulu-Natal. He was personally affected by the floods and he had to assist communities at the same time.



**Asonle Melapi**  
Founder and chairperson

**A**sonle Melapi, 33, is an activist in the gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) space. Named after her sister, who was killed by a boyfriend of four months, she started the Nokwanda Patocka GBVF Foundation to advocate for survivors of abuse, whether in the courts or in their personal healing journeys. Asonle is a member of a number of organisations, including the Women's Sector Council in Nelson Mandela Bay, the Baphi Abafazi Movement, the Youth Chamber Council Committee and the National Gender-Based Violence Working Committee of the Informal Economy Development Forum. In 2023, she won the 22nd Nelson Mandela University Herald Citizen of the Year award for Gender-Based Violence and she was the recipient of the Inside Politics 100 South African Shining Stars award in the same year. In 2024, she was the United Nations Best Diplomats Delegate and winner of the South African Cities Network Youth-Led GBV 2024 award. She says she hopes to see a nation where gender-based violence and femicide does not exist, "where all human rights are adhered to and perpetrators of this scourge are harshly and severely punished by our courts of law".



**Simamkele Siyamvuyela Gcaza**  
Founder and director

**S**imamkele Siyamvuyela Gcaza, 24, works as an office administrator at lincinga Investments, but she is also the founder and director of Future Foundation, a nongovernmental organisation she started after working with her friend at the Rising Sun Foundation in Gqeberha. She says through the community work Nelson Mandela Bay municipality, she realised her purpose and desire to do more for her own community. As director of the foundation, she markets the foundation's key objective and works with board members to ensure the smooth running of the foundation. She also has to evaluate the foundation's short-term objectives and long-term goals, while monitoring budgets, resources and procedures by working with cross-functional teams. Some significant challenges she faced while running the foundation are the shortages of funding or financial support, but she has through many efforts ensured the foundation's sustainability. Simamkele says she looks forward to what the future holds, and is excited about what young people can bring to the table: they can start businesses, create jobs and drive economic growth, helping address problems such as unemployment and poverty.



**Bianca Michaeline Jordan**  
Social specialist

**B**ianca Jordan, 35, uses her identity as a young, coloured woman from Johannesburg to change the perception of coloured people in South Africa, who she says are often associated with guns and gangsterism. She obtained her master's degree in commerce in local economic development and she says having her research published should inspire other girls in her community to do the same and more. Bianca works at AMEA Power as a social specialist, where she focuses on environmental, social and governance issues in the renewable energy sector. She is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of international environmental and social standards across projects in Southern Africa. Bianca is determined to see more companies take economic, social and governance and economic development seriously, and attempts to put this issue high on the agenda. Bianca is currently working on a solar farm project in the North West and Mozambique. She also started a feeding scheme and is working on starting a local early childhood development centre to share her skills with others. She believes South Africa has a lot of potential when it comes to the potential of renewable energy.



**'Civil society has kept hope alive. Where other new democracies have failed it is not an exaggeration to say that in South Africa activism has prevented the dismembering of democracy.'**

Mark Heywood, human rights activist and founder of Section27



Photo: Jaco Marais/Getty Images



# The Power of the Bean

## McCafé's ethical brew

McDonald's McCafé pioneers ethical and eco-friendly coffee, partnering with the Rainforest Alliance for ethical farming and worker protection.



## Rainforest alliance's impact

RFA collaborates with 40,000+ sustainable coffee farms, prioritising human rights, biodiversity, and water conservation across the globe. The farmers carefully grade the highest quality beans, ensuring the highest quality standard.



## Arabica excellence

Arabica beans are known for their mellow, sweet-to-fruity flavour with moderate caffeine. Using the best McCafé's blending formula ensures consistent temperature and taste at every outlet through small-batch grinding.



## Global sustainability goals

McDonald's has committed to sourcing 100% more sustainable coffee globally, focusing on ethical sourcing and waste reduction.



## Waste repurposing and positive impact

McCafé coffee waste fertilises 100+ gardens through the "Sow The Bean" initiative, which provides seed pods for sustainable gardening.



## Feel good coffee experience

McDonald's "Scale for Good" initiatives prioritise sustainability, ethical sourcing, and waste reduction for an enhanced customer experience.



## Preserving the land for generations

Striving for zero coffee waste in landfills, McDonald's contributes to land preservation for a greener future.



McCafé®

As a lifestyle coffee brand, we offer more than just great tasting coffee. We also ensure that our coffee beans are responsibly sourced. We have proudly partnered with the Rainforest Alliance, which helps train farmers about the importance of growing coffee beans in a more sustainable way to preserve the land for generations to come. This puts us on course to reach our goal of sourcing 100% more sustainable coffee globally.







## 200 Young South Africans 2024 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT



### Hector Dibakoane

Culture curator and chief executive

**H**ector Dibakoane, who was born and bred in Mpumalanga, is the culture curator and the chief executive of the Makers Valley Partnership. Makers Valley is situated in Johannesburg's inner city stretching from the suburbs of New Doornfontein to Bezuidenhout Valley and includes Bertrams, Judith's Paarl, Troyeville and Lorentzville. The name comes from the many entrepreneurs such as artists, urban gardeners and artisans who live there. Urban decay and unemployment, particularly among the youth, also mark the area. The 32-year-old's work is centred on creating access to information, work opportunities, spaces and healing while spreading awareness of the environment. He does this through collaborations with various institutions and organisations to explore a system called the "well-being economy" — a practice of putting people and the planet first. As the cultural curator he uses the arts as a tool to work with people in the surrounding neighbourhoods on various topics such as sustainability. Hector, through Makers Valley, organises clean-up campaigns and runs programmes that aim to upskill the youth and raise awareness of the environment. Having personally experienced deprivation of resources, information and access to spaces has inspired Hector to do something to help others.



### Phathutshedzo Mundalamo

Environmental consultant

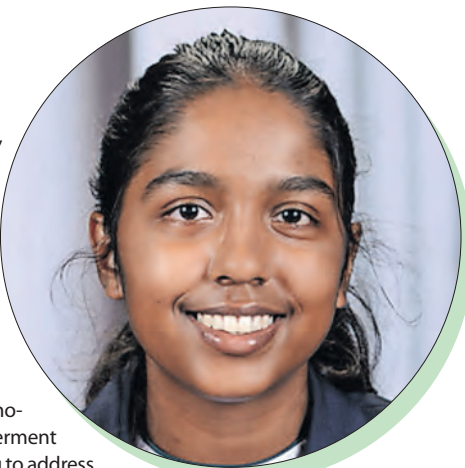
**P**hathutshedzo Mundalamo is an environmental consultant working at the Airports Company South Africa. Her work entails coordinating the formulation and implementation of plans, policies, programmes and regulations to control environmental impacts resulting from airport operations. Specifically, Phathutshedzo works at OR Tambo International Airport, ensuring that it complies with environmental legislation. In addition, she is involved in resource conservation initiatives such as water, electricity and waste management. The 34-year-old, who has qualifications in geology and in environmental management, says her role model was her grandmother, Dr Humbulani Mundalamo, who sparked her love for science, which led to a need to protect the natural environment. Another experience — being involved in drilling boreholes and bringing water to people in Gauteng — made her realise the importance of clean water. This was reinforced when Phathutshedzo was working at Cape Town International Airport and Day Zero was approaching. She was part of a team that took measures to prevent the water shortage, such as installing water tanks and groundwater wells.



### Almaaz Mudaly

Climate justice activist

**A**lmaaz Mudaly, a grade 12 learner at Roedean School, is a climate change activist serving as a high school liaison person for the Youth Climate Action Plan at the South African Institute of International Affairs. Her work involves influencing climate policies and leaders at provincial, national and global levels. Almaaz, 18, is also an award-winning debater and speaker, regularly contributing to local and global events advocating for climate change and youth inclusion. She has represented South African youth at international forums, and contributed to drafting climate statements. Additionally, she works on innovative community projects such as an agriculture empowerment platform and sustainable food insulation solutions, aiming to address food security and environmental problems. Almaaz serves on various youth councils and contributes to global health and education research. An achievement she is proud of is coordinating the launch of the South African youth parliament on climate change, which brought together more than 100 groups from all socio-economic backgrounds around the country. Together they contributed to the South African Youth Climate Action Plan, which was presented to the Presidential Climate Commission and at COP 26.



### Dorcas Didi Lekganyane

Traditional medicine researcher and co-founder

**D**idi Lekganyane is a researcher focusing on traditional medicine and the co-founder of Sweet Biotics, a herbalist store that distributes graded, quality traditional tonics to mainstream markets and outlets. The 32-year-old, who has a master's in environmental science that focused on botany and plant biotechnology, is determined to break the stigma surrounding using traditional medicine; she is a plenary speaker and adviser on traditional medicine backed by scientific proof. She also uses radio and television shows to hold conversations and spread knowledge about her area of expertise. Didi is part of South Africa's Traditional Medicinal Council, which informs policy and justifies government regulations. She has produced a four-part documentary series on the life of a young traditional healer. Didi says her grandmother, the queen of untaught science and a traditional healer who collected herbs and helped people, ignited her curiosity about nature, the importance of being aware of the environment and healing. A key project close to Didi's heart is her work with a group of women in a rural area who run an informal seed bank and trade seeds with the aim of ensuring biodiversity is protected.



### Boitumelo Molete

Social development policy coordinator

**B**oitumelo Molete, 34, is the social development policy coordinator for labour federation Cosatu. Among her many responsibilities is to lobby in Cosatu policy negotiations with the National Economic Development and Labour Council and government departments. She has also represented Cosatu at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Conference of Parties (COP). Boitumelo develops material for Cosatu's social development with regard to health, education, social security, climate change and the just energy transition. She coordinates research on climate change and adaptation and mitigation strategies, and the implementation of Cosatu's climate change projects. Boitumelo said one of her challenges has been to navigate being a woman in a male-dominated environment — for example when she was running just energy transition worker education sessions with people from the coal-mining and fossil-fuel power stations. Boitumelo is proud of her work on the just energy transition project for Cosatu's structures. After workshops were held with the structures, they developed toolkits from the issues emerging from their particular structures. These toolkits will be used to assist Cosatu lobby for an inclusive just energy transition.



### Anita Mbekephi

Founder and director

**A**nita Mbekephi, 30, is the founder and director of Eco-Troop Projects, a nonprofit in the Durban that organises clean-up drives, educational programmes and policy advocacy campaigns. Her work not only addresses immediate environmental issues but also fosters a culture of sustainability and responsibility. Anita says she would describe her organisation as "a beacon of hope, driving meaningful change and empowering individuals to take action for a cleaner, healthier planet". She forges partnerships with community groups and environmental agencies. A major achievement in her journey as an environmental activist was Anita's work with the department of forestry, fisheries and the environment's nationwide Good Green Deeds campaign in 2019. She organised her first major clean-up event at the Durban Harbour, which incorporates local eco-systems and commerce. Part of the event's success was the diverse group of volunteers it attracted. Anita says she is motivated by seeing the increase in the number of volunteers and in the work that transforms places into clean spaces. Her latest initiative is the Capitec Partners for Possibility programme, which brings business leaders and school principals together to identify ways to improve schools, and thus educational outcomes.



### Ntandoyenkosinabadala Makhoba

Founder and sustainability communications practitioner

**N**tandoyenkosinabadala Makhoba, 24, is the founder of You Plant, which partners with communities and institutions to teach people how to grow vegetables in reusable shopping bags using their kitchen scraps, which in turn helps raise awareness about waste management. Her job includes creating environmentally educational content and collaborating with schools to run workshops. Ntandoyenkosinabadala focuses on promoting sustainable living practices and empowering people to take control of their food production. Additionally, she communicates environmental sustainability appropriately and raises awareness about the green economy and environmental concerns. She says her work enables people to spend less on vegetables and have access to nutritious food. Through You Plant she also spearheads an initiative that encourages residents to clean up their dump sites. This involves using the soil and vegetable scraps to make compost, which reduces the amount of waste in their community and creates a sustainable source of fertiliser for gardens. She says representing the University of Johannesburg at the Humanitarian Affairs Asia Green Summit in Bangkok was a major accomplishment.



### Lettah Sikhosana

Senior lecturer

**L**ettah Sikhosana, 29, is a senior lecturer and post-graduate studies representative at Unisa in the department of science and technology education. She is the primary lecturer for the environmental education module and supervises master's and doctoral students doing research in areas such as environmental education, education for sustainable development, solid waste management, climate change education and science education. Lettah is also responsible for managing and leading the master's and doctoral portfolio as the departmental postgraduate representative. In addition, she is a project leader for the Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) award from the National Research Foundation and the co-investigator for the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) grant. Lettah's most proud of work she did during her doctoral studies, where she developed and implemented a strategy for managing solid waste at primary schools in the Nkangala district of Mpumalanga. Lettah is now leading the project to implement the system at 10 more schools in the district. What excites her about her work is that it aligns with the 17 United Nations sustainable development goals.





# BREAKING NEWS

## 60% FIRST-YEAR DROPOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S UNTOLD UNIVERSITY CRISIS

Headline Footnote Reference:

In the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) as a region, South Africa is one of the countries with the highest first-year university dropout rates in the world due to economic inequalities and other socio-economic factors (Moodley & Singh, 2015). According to Viljoen (2019), university dropout rates in South Africa are incredibly high, with between 50%-60% of first year students dropping out.

Fundi Match



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**DID YOU KNOW?** South Africa has a  
**60% dropout rate**  
for **first year students** at tertiary institutions!

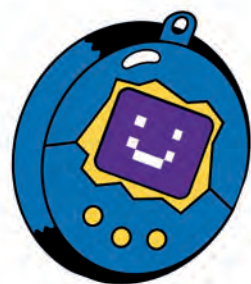
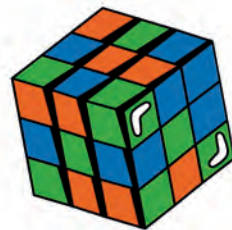
**FundiMatch Career Assessments** can help **match students'** aptitude with their **career choice** before they enter tertiary education.

This helps students make the **best decisions** when it comes to choosing their majors.



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# EDUCATION

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## Edwin Hlangwani

Researcher and lecturer

**E**dwin Hlangwani, 27, is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Johannesburg. His research work focuses on creating a nexus between emerging technologies and indigenous knowledge systems to develop, optimise and mobilise sustainable food systems in rural and semi-urban areas. As part of his research, he designed mathematical models and prototypes that simulate large-scale production of traditional foods such as vukanyi (marula fruit beer), karri (Khoi-San honey mead), umqombothi (sorghum beer) and vucema (palm wine). He is at the final stages of submitting his PhD thesis, which explores indigenous knowledge around the sustainable use of wild fruits and edible medicinal plants such as devil's claw. Through his thesis, he aims to demonstrate that South Africa is a model country for scientific exploration, given its diverse ecosystems and ancient traditions. Hlangwani is a recipient of the NRF-Mitacs Research Award for completing an extended joint research project on "The structure, biochemistry, and function of metabolites produced by *Metschnikowia pulcherrima* during the fermentation of low-alcohol marula fruit beer at near 0 degrees Celsius" at the University of British Columbia Food Process Engineering Laboratory in Canada.



## Bafentse Belinda Mabasa

Teacher

**B**afentse Belinda Mabasa, 26, is a grade three teacher in a deep rural area of Sebayeng in Polokwane. As an educator, she ensures that her learners experience the world from their classroom through technology by focusing on educating teachers and students about coding and robotics — without the use of technology. She has trained more than 200 teachers in coding and robotics. Her journey in educating other teachers began after she was involved in a programme aimed at educating others in the field of coding and robotics. Through this experience, she found that her passion lies in training teachers to teach subjects that pave the way into a future of technology. At school, she is also the financial officer, coding and robotics teacher and the education management information systems officer. Mabasa possesses a bachelor of education in foundation phase from the University of Johannesburg. She believes teaching methods are changing, and says new methodologies and pedagogy are exciting for the teaching profession. Mabasa is also working on a project called Boy Child, which focuses on teaching troubled boys how to read and write.



## Edith Phalane

Research manager/specialist scientist

**E**dith Phalane, 33, is a research manager and specialist scientist for the South African Medical Research Council at the University of Johannesburg's Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research Extramural Unit. Part of her work involves knowledge generation, capacity building and contributing towards public health and epidemiologic expertise to respond to pandemics by contributing to the transformation agenda, the National Development Plan and the United Nations' sustainable development goals. Since joining the research council, she has assisted master's students. Edith is part of the Boloka Data Repository project which seeks to harness heterogenous data to evaluate the potential effect of HIV responses among key populations. Through this work, she has been exposed to working with diverse groups nationally and internationally such as Johns Hopkins University, Emory University and the University of South Carolina. She has co-authored several research papers and together with her mentor, Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya, she recently co-presented and co-authored two conference abstracts at the 5th National Big Data Health Science Conference in the US. She is also a mentor and judge at the Eskom Expo for young scientists.



## Tshimangadzo Munonde

Farm technician and entrepreneur

**T**shimangadzo Munonde, 33, is a senior lecturer in analytical and environmental research at Unisa's Institute for Nanotechnology and Water Sustainability. His main responsibility is to guide and supervise post-graduate students in their research projects related to environmental water quality monitoring and the treatment and remediation of wastewater. This work aims to protect environmental water sources, such as rivers, lakes, dams and wells from pollutants. In addition, he is involved in circular economy research, focusing on the synthesis of nanomaterials from various waste materials for wastewater treatment such as converting plastic waste into carbon used in wastewater treatment. After working on a project in a rural area where villagers relied on river water and finding arsenic in the river, Munonde is now focused on humanitarian projects. He is involved in the Water Research Commission project that is centred on assessing the water quality of surface water in the rural areas in the Eastern Cape. Munonde is also involved in the Brics project that detects and removes pharmaceutical drugs from water samples. He is the chair of the Engaged Scholarship project at the Unisa nanotechnology and water institute.



## Nelisiwa Leticia Simelane

Head of department (student counsellor)

**W**hen Nelisiwa Leticia Simelane, 35, applied to study primary healthcare in 2017 and her application was rejected, she was undaunted. She decided instead to study nursing education and management, and was offered a lecturing post at the South African Military Health Service Nursing College before she even completed her degree. This taught her that some rejections can usher us to true our destiny. Life in the military requires that Nelisiwa is a disciplined example to her students. She has many responsibilities regarding the running of the SRC at the college, and she also promotes the nursing college on various platforms. She believes that the future of nursing is bright, and that many young people are now choosing nursing education as a career. Her one desire is that nurses be better remunerated for their efforts. Nelisiwa has come a long way: she came from a family where nobody had completed their matric, and it took a lot of courage to claim her place in the world. She now has two nursing qualifications, and is studying towards her master of nursing science. She is adamant that the youth be given more opportunities, and believes that the military is an excellent career path for those who are struggling to find employment.



## Shubi Mosiscca Molekwa

Secondary school teacher

**S**hubi Mosiscca Molekwa, 25, is a secondary school teacher at Modilati Secondary School in Hammanskraal. As an educator for grades nine to 12, she provides a nurturing and stimulating atmosphere that encourages her learners to freely explore ideas and cultivate their critical thinking abilities. Shubi holds a bachelor of education specialising in senior phase and further education and training, as well as a bachelor of education honours degree in education management, policy and law. She is in her final year of completing a master of education. In her spare time, Shubi is the co-founder and proprietor of Ikageng Tutorials, located in Stinkwater, Hammanskraal, which provides pro bono tutoring services to grade 12 learners in the fields of history and tourism with the long-term goal of providing tutoring services to students in mathematics and sciences. She believes society must provide young people with support and encouragement to help them achieve their aspirations. Looking towards the future, Molekwa aims to obtain a PhD in education management, policy and law to explore possible amendments to the policies governing the South African education system and measures that ensure the safety of teachers.



## Lekhooa Seleke

Educator

**L**ekhooa Seleke, 35, is a grade 11 and grade 12 business studies and tourism educator at Grassland Secondary School. He is a member of the school safety steering committee for Motheo district in the Free State and is the alumni president of the Central University of Technology, Free State, which has a campaign called #ReleaseCertificatesCampaign aimed at assisting graduates whose certificates are withheld by the university because they are unable to pay off their debts. Lekhooa is a recipient of the National Teaching Awards in the category of Kader Asmal Excellence Awards. In his personal capacity, he runs a Food on Wheels project weekly, wherein he prepares food for men awaiting employment on street curbs. He has also established a drug reduction programme, where a group of like-minded people hold weekly developmental sessions for learners who exhibit traits of substance abuse. Lekhooa is inspired by the prospects of shaping learners' minds in such a way that they understand that their material conditions do not define their future potential. He envisions a future where the education department has mechanisms to track down learners who drop out of school because of substance abuse.



## Curwyn Mapaling

Clinical psychologist and senior lecturer

**C**urwyn Mapaling, 31, is a senior lecturer and clinical psychologist at the University of Johannesburg where he integrates psychological principles into higher education and beyond to promote well-being in the Global South. He holds a master of arts in clinical psychology and community counselling from Stellenbosch University. Curwyn is reading for his PhD in education and his working title is Academic Resilience of Engineering Students: A Case Study. Through teaching, research and clinical work, he has strived to create transformative and humanising educational experiences that prioritise mental health and holistic development. He has worked to collaborate across disciplines to inform policies and practices that foster resilience, adaptability and lifelong learning. Some of his notable achievements include being awarded an East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research Methodologies and Management, the University of California-Los Angeles Tirisano Training Project Scholarship and the Mandela Rhodes Scholarship. He is committed to advancing the United Nations' sustainable development goals three (good health and well-being) and four (quality education).







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# EDUCATION

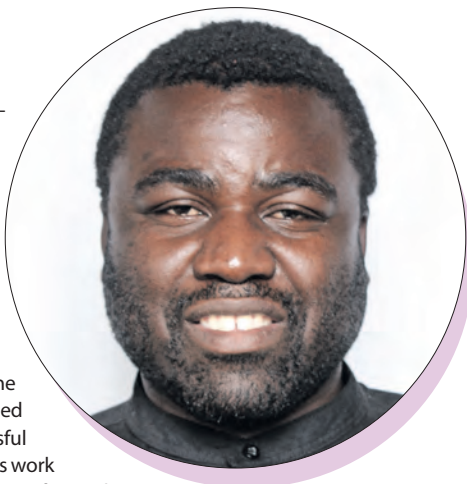
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## Khathutshelo Vincent Mphaga

Environmental health practitioner

**K**hathutshelo Vincent Mphaga, 32, is a registered independent environmental health practitioner with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. He is pursuing a PhD in environmental health, inspired by his participation in combating the Ebola outbreak of 2014. During the outbreak, he worked for Port Health, where he screened and educated travellers, a service recognised with a certificate of excellence from the department of health. In his current academic pursuits, his project investigates the potential link between indoor radon exposure and lung cancer risk among residents living near gold-mine dumps in Gauteng, particularly focusing on underprivileged communities. Through his work, he has learnt that successful crisis response requires collaboration, whereby authorities work together to safeguard public health. While his interest lies in safeguarding public health during outbreaks and crises, his attention is also in sustainable agriculture and is focusing on developing a herd with minimal reliance on veterinary interventions. He envisions the field of environmental health will transition from a reactive, facility-centric model to a proactive environmentally focused approach to ensure a better future for South Africans.



## Shirley Kholofelo Selahle

Lecturer

**S**hirley Kholofelo Selahle, 30, lectures analytical chemistry at the University of Venda. She is also on the teaching and learning committee in the department, where she ensures that first-year students do well in their chemistry modules, and supervises two honours students and three master's students, guiding them in their research work and ensuring they complete their studies. One of the achievements of which Shirley is most proud is getting her doctorate in chemistry from the University of Johannesburg, despite having had difficulties with paying the fees. "During my PhD journey, I learned that dedication and determination really pay. What is needed is to focus on the targeted goal without allowing any external factors to disrupt you," she says. Shirley is involved in a water project in the Eastern Cape, where she is assessing and monitoring the type of pollutants found in rivers, dams, boreholes and springs. In addition, she is working on a water project at the University of Venda, detecting and monitoring pollutants in Thohoyandou water bodies and developing analytical methods that will be effective in extracting them.



## Thobani Ndlovu

Principal

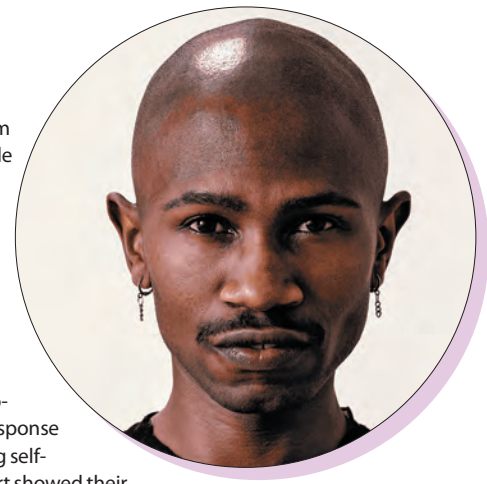
**T**hirty-five-year-old Thobani Ndlovu is the head of the Royal Drakensberg Primary School and coordinator for the Khanyisela Project. As head of school, he sees to its operational, academic and socio-cultural running. He handles the material and staff resources as well as the curricula, so that it "continues to meet its vision of transforming this rural space through quality education". The Khanyisela Project delivers porridge to 18 crèches in Amazizi village. Thobani monitors their needs, such as renovations and building; nutrition; provision of learning resources; training and the professional development of the staff. "In both these entities, I create and maintain spaces where solution-oriented collaborations occur and bring together possible benefactors and beneficiaries in order to bring about change in society," he says. Thobani, who was selected as a Mandela Washington Fellow 2024, is motivated to excel so he can "create a safe learning environment for as many children as I can, so that they can thrive by just being themselves". He says of the youth of South Africa: "We owe it to them to help them develop the confidence they need, so that they realise that they are the ones who will come up with solutions to challenges, as the custodians of the future."



## Simamkele Sitwebile

Art facilitator, coordinator and curriculum writer

**I**n his job as an art facilitator, coordinator and curriculum writer at Lalela, a not-for-profit organisation, Simamkele Sitwebile, 31, develops, coordinates and facilitates art-making workshops for under-resourced schools in Cape Town. "My role is to use art's inherent properties as a tool for social cohesion and criticality among grade four to 11 learners from schools without art," he says. He is especially proud of the 2023 holiday workshops he developed and facilitated at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town, titled *A Gaze from Within*. The eight-day Lalela high school programme, and the subsequent group exhibition, was a response to the museum's *When We See Us*, an exhibition exploring self-definition of the black body. Lalela learners who took part showed their work at the 2024 Cape Town Art Fair and seven out of 14 artworks were sold. Another of standout achievement for Simamkele was the Zeitz MOCAA's Centre for Art Education initiative, where students from various schools and backgrounds participated in workshops and an exhibition. He says he is driven to excel "to prove to myself, my childhood community and my students that it is possible to surmount the odds of growing up in poverty".



## Lara Erasmus

Director

**A**s the director of Lifting Dreams, Lara Erasmus, 30, helps to provide quality academic assistance to underprivileged communities. She drives the recruitment, training and mentorship of the team of tutors who run Saturday classes. Lara establishes relationships with the communities where they work so that programmes can be tailored to their specific needs. She helps to develop volunteer networks to ensure learners receive individual attention while paid tutors lead classes. Sourcing funding for tutors, transport and food is part of her job. Lifting Dreams, a nonprofit and black economic empowerment organisation, reaches an average of 500 learners every week for maths and English lessons. The project creates jobs for tutors, who are often from less-privileged backgrounds themselves, while they pursue their studies. "In this, our tutors come full circle as a living, breathing example to our learners that their futures can be bright," Lara says. In addition, she has an advisory role at The Riverfields Foundation and LoveStruck, charities that focus on upliftment through various efforts such as housing, medical support and education in her hometown of Kempton Park. In addition, Lara runs her marketing and communications company, Creative Konsortium.



## Mojaesi Violet Phejane

Senior learning designer

**M**ojaesi Violet Phejane, 35, is a senior learning designer at the The Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. She manages client relations; develops training materials, particularly around integrating technology into teaching and learning; plays a supervisory role and conducts research on best practices in blended online learning, as well as creating and managing staff and student training programmes. Mojaesi is on the executive committee of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa, where she holds the social media and websites as well as the workshops and webinar portfolios. She sits on the faculty of theology and religion board. Mojaesi co-founded the Kutloanong Rehabilitation for Ex-Offenders organisation and is a reviewer for academic journals. She is the project lead for a technology learning management system tool called FeedbackFruits. "My passion lies in bridging the digital divide in online teaching and learning, fostering success in higher education. Through research, I aim to not only support institutional success but also address student access and success challenges," she says. The advice she would give her younger self is that where you come from does not dictate where you will go.



**'Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.'**

Nelson Mandela





200 Young South Africans 2024

## EDUCATION

Know more. Be more.

FUNDI

### Sthabile Kolwa

Lecturer

Thirty-five-year old Sthabile Kolwa is lecturer in the physics department at the University of Johannesburg and is responsible for curriculum design, teaching and running undergraduate physics and honours-level astrophysics modules. She is also doing research involving galaxy formation and cosmology. "I learn about how galaxies have evolved over the known universe's existence," she says. Her job involves publishing her research in journals and giving talks on it at department seminars and astrophysics conferences. Sthabile, who has a PhD from The Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, communicates concepts and discoveries in astronomy in online articles and also focuses on women and non-binary people who have been effective in the science, tech, engineering and maths fields. She says a challenge has been social isolation in terms of gender and race. As chair of the early-career science committee of the African Astronomical Society, Sthabile is involved in efforts to raise funds for master's, doctoral and postdoctoral students, for equipment and research-related travel.



### Sibusiso Mdhuli

Director

As the director of the Acornhoek Institute for Science and Technology, which he helped build from scratch, Sibusiso Mdhuli, 29, is responsible for overseeing the planning, execution and evaluation of all projects, ensuring that they align with the institute's goals of promoting science, technology, engineering and maths education and digital skills training in rural areas. He helps to develop new projects to support high schools and to provide digital skills training for unemployed youths. He also works with other organisations, educational institutions and community groups and raises funds for projects. Sibusiso is instrumental in organising science clubs at local schools, maths competitions, summer school for grade 11 pupils and web-development bootcamps. Sibusiso says that growing up in a rural area, he faced problems of limited resources and information. "These experiences instilled in me an understanding of the obstacles young people face and this fuelled my determination to make a difference."



### Lebo Trudy Rashijane

PhD student and nonprofit director

Lebo Trudy Rashijane, 27, is a PhD student in animal production at the University of Limpopo and the director of the nonprofit organisation the TruCam Ultimate Support. Her project, which specialises in animal genomics, focuses on goat genomics and the commercialising of goat meat in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In her academic career, she has authored and co-authored more than 15 scientific publications. Her educational background has assisted her in founding TruCam Ultimate Support, which aims to empower youth in Limpopo through various community initiatives and expose them to different career paths. Lebo aims to bridge the gap between the scientific world and reality by educating people on the benefits of science, especially in the agricultural sector. She is currently involved in the Agricultural Research Centre Professional Development Programme. Through her experiences, she has learnt that every day is a learning day and that working together with others yields better results than doing it individually.



### Baneng Moraswi Naape

Economist

Baneng Moraswi Naape, 29, is an economist at the Competition Commission of South Africa, where he works alongside economists and legal counsel to develop economic analyses to explain how competition works in different markets. His work involves developing economic evidence concerning mergers and acquisitions, anti-competitive conduct and other related anti-trust issues. During his tenure at the Competition Tribunal, Baneng was involved in several high-level cases including the acquisition of Distell by Heineken, which saw several public interest-related conditions imposed. He holds a BCom honours in economics and is a PhD candidate. His family's past experiences have inspired him to work hard after witnessing the financial implications of his parents not making it to university. As part of his personal goals, he is developing the Baneng Foundation, which aims to create a training ground for social change by empowering youth and providing financial and technical support to rural communities.



### Louis Koen

Lecturer

Louis Koen, 28, loves the law, how it safeguards the rights of all citizens, and what changes it can achieve. He's a lecturer in the department of public law at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), where he does research on how sustainable development, attaining dignified work and international economic law fit together. He focuses on vulnerable groups, including those working in the informal economy. Louis is the head of the UJ Moot Court programme, which simulates court processes by giving law students cases to argue, as if they were in a real court. This helps students to gain skills and many of his students have won competitions. What he is proud of is that many of them come from less privileged backgrounds, and the programme gives them the chance to travel and see other countries for the first time. Louis is inspired by Professor Letlhokwa Mpedi, the vice-chancellor and principal of the university, who is one of his PhD supervisors. They are currently writing a book together.



**'Let us remember:  
One child, one teacher,  
one book, one pen can  
change the world.'**

Malala Yousafzai, education activist and the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate at the age of 17



Tshwane University  
of Technology  
*We empower people*

20 YEARS  
2004-2024

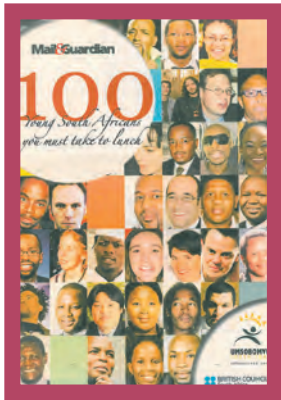
#fromGood2Great

Your **FUTURE** Starts here  
Move from **GOOD** to **GREAT**

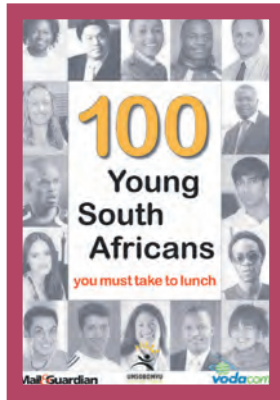
Visit [www.tut.ac.za](http://www.tut.ac.za) to find the programme fit for YOUR next step in life.



# The Mail & Guardian 3 700 young visionaries



2006



2007



2008



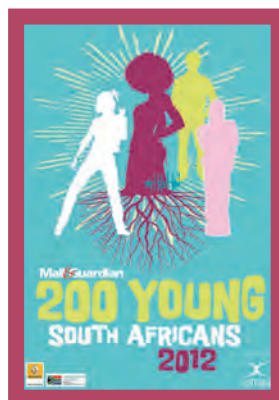
2009



2010



2011



2012



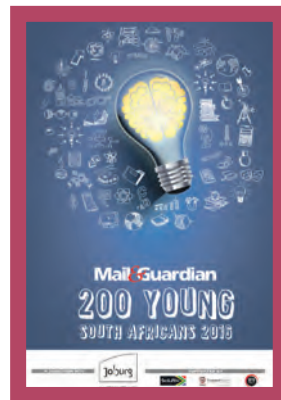
2013



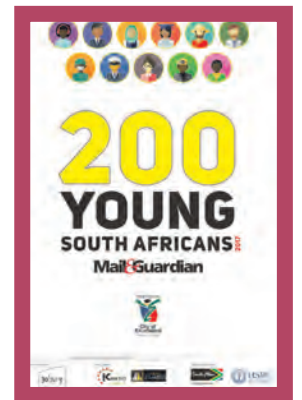
2014



2015



2016



2017



2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024





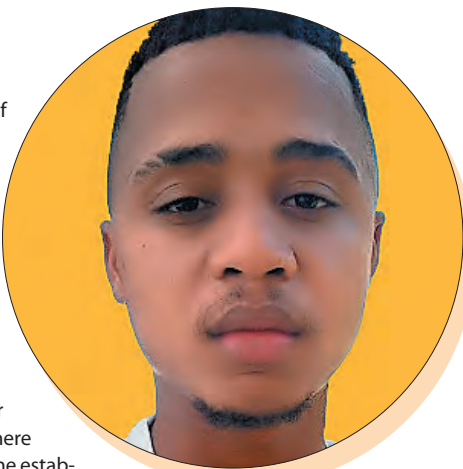
Moma Ngwanapeu Molabe  
Postgraduate student

Moma Ngwanapeu Molabe is a 22-year-old postgraduate student studying communication management at the University of Johannesburg. She represented South Africa and the university at a United Nations gathering in Thailand where she spoke about how science and artificial intelligence could be used to help solve challenges in the country as we strive to attain the UN's 17 sustainable development goals. She also studied international relations in Germany. Through these experiences, Moma said she learned the importance of global collaboration and the effect of technology and education on societal development. Moma also realised the value of diverse perspectives in tackling complex issues and the power of effective communication in driving change. She says AI can be used to analyse audience behaviour and preferences, which can be used to optimise content delivery on various digital platforms. Moma envisions the future of communication management as being at the forefront of integrating and leveraging advancements in technology, science and artificial intelligence. She says effective communication will be critical in translating complex scientific and technological concepts into clear, accessible information for diverse audiences.



Shaun Gavin Smith  
University student

Final-year civil engineering student at the University of Johannesburg Shaun Gavin Smith, 26, oversees and participates in creative projects that combine academic rigour with practical applications. His thesis focuses on carbon sequestration in concrete. He sees the future of civil engineering as being entrenched in sustainability and technological innovation. Eco-friendly construction approaches, such as carbon sequestration in concrete and the use of recycled materials, can lower the environmental effect of construction projects. Shaun recently oversaw the design of a road project and carried out research on travel behaviour. He is committed to peer mentorship, tutoring, community service and a future where education and technology uplift his home community. The establishment of a chess club is one of his main accomplishments. It taught him invaluable lessons: "First, it emphasised the value of initiative and persistence in realising a dream. I became aware of the value of leadership and mentoring," he says. What excites Shaun most in his field is the opportunity for civil engineers to contribute to projects that not only address technical issues but also improve the quality of life of communities.



Ntisiseng Moloi  
Project engineer

Ntisiseng Moloi, 30, is a project engineer at Enel Green Power, South Africa. She manages engineering activities for wind and solar energy projects. This includes collaboration with stakeholders, contractors and consultants, equipment manufacturers as well as Eskom, to guarantee that projects conform to technical standards and the power utility's regulations. Her responsibilities include coordinating the engineering team and working closely with other organisational units to provide technical input for business cases and manage the overall planning and execution of design activities. Ntisiseng also oversees external engineering services contracts. In addition, she analyses design modifications and handles non-conformities during construction and commissioning. A major challenge Ntisiseng faced was her battle with imposter syndrome, resulting in her trying to validate her ability on her own. She overcame this by acknowledging the power in seeking support from peers and mentors. Ntisiseng was chosen by the International Electrotechnical Committee (South Africa) to represent the country in the Young Professional Programme.



Bhekani Sibusiso Ntuli  
Project officer

Bhekani Sibusiso Ntuli, 26, is a project officer at the South African National Energy Development Institute. His job is to coordinate projects in the renewable energy sector. He also deals with finance, administration and technical support, which includes managing procurement processes and facilitating workshops on topics such as the just energy transition, green hydrogen and renewable heating and cooling. Bhekani is also the gender manager for the Southern African Solar Thermal Training & Demonstration Initiative, and advocate for women's equal representation in renewable energy. As the occupational health and safety representative for the applied research and innovation department, he also ensures safety compliance. Bhekani is a member of the South African National Energy Development Institute's conference steering committee, where his role is to organise the planning and execution of the conference. The project he is proud of is the GH2 Research Status and Knowledge Sharing for SA initiative, the aim of which is to assess green hydrogen research and align it with private sector needs and public sector policy objectives. Bhekani is motivated by the desire to contribute to change in the energy sector and address societal problems.



Tshilidzi Samuel Ramunenyiwa  
Project energy engineer

Tshilidzi Samuel Ramunenyiwa, 28, is a project energy engineer at Reonet, which focuses on smarter management of water and energy resources. He is responsible for conducting energy audits, as well as designing, developing and implementing energy-efficient systems. He collaborates with cross-functional teams to integrate renewable energy sources and optimise existing systems. He also oversees the installation and maintenance of energy-efficient equipment, manages project timelines and budgets and provides technical support to clients. The rollout of inverter battery systems at rural health clinics in the Western Cape at the peak of load-shedding is something of which Tshilidzi is proud. He learnt that adaptive problem-solving and understanding a community's needs is essential for the initiative's success. Tshilidzi is involved in initiatives crucial for the advancement of renewable energy adoption, including the City of Cape Town's independent power producer programme; the rural primary healthcare hybrid inverter initiative; the Western Cape department of health's Race to Zero climate change plan; and the implementation of solar photovoltaic systems at health facilities.



Beauty Shibiri  
Postdoctoral fellow

Beauty Shibiri, 30, is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Limpopo's Materials Modelling Centre. She says: "I am working on energy storage materials, particularly spinel Li-Mn-O cathodes for lithium-ion batteries, and lithium titanium phosphate (LTP) solid state electrolyte for lithium batteries as an alternative for liquid electrolytes." Beauty is advancing her research skills and professional development through training to become an independent researcher. She also has a few leadership roles, including being a cluster coordinator for the energy and storage group under the Materials Modelling Centre. She serves on the university's school of physical and mineral sciences research committee as the representative of the Materials Modelling Centre and assists in the supervision of postgraduate students. Beauty says a good work challenge can keep her awake at night and have her waking up early in the morning to find a solution. She is motivated by her family's educational background; her parents never had the privilege of education but they made sure that she did. Beauty has completed her PhD and is proud that she is the first person in her village to do so and feels she has represented her family and community well.



Ashanti Kutala Mbanga  
Project manager for energy and the environment

Ashanti Kutala Mbanga, 35, is the project manager for energy and environment at the South African National Energy Development Institute (Sanedi), where she facilitates the implementation of the national energy efficiency appliances standards and labelling programme. She works with the department of mineral resources and energy and the Sanedi general manager to manage the electric and electronic appliance market to ensure energy-saving appliances are sold. Ashanti facilitates all processes to procure services in consultation with international, regional and local project partners. Managing project budgets and developing project plans to save the country electricity also forms part of her work. She lists her advocacy for women and youth inclusion in the energy sector as an achievement she is proud of. She was elected as the vice-chairperson for the South African Association for Females in Energy Efficiency, which enabled her to promote gender equality. Ashanti previously worked in the sustainable transport sector and says the change to the energy sector was challenging because she had limited technical knowledge. She completed relevant courses and finds value in having diversified her skills.



Gugu Kubheka  
Postdoctoral researcher

Gugu Kubheka, 35, is a postdoctoral researcher at the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa). She conducts research on renewable energy sources, in particular solar energy. Her research focuses mainly on the design and development of low-cost and efficient energy materials to help lower clean energy costs. The intention is to commercialise or patent the product. Gugu's work also entails the publication of research, mentoring and co-supervising postgraduate students in collaboration with other institutions and is currently working with a PhD candidate at the University of Pretoria and an MSc candidate at Rhodes University. Gugu was one of seven women out of 600 selected for the 2023 L'Oréal-Unesco For Women in Science Award national programme, which funds the research projects of young women scientists. She says being selected among these brilliant scientists was one achievement she is proud of. Gugu is motivated by the knowledge that research can find clean low-carbon solutions for the energy crisis. One challenge that she and other scientists face is that there are few opportunities for long-term contracts that will enable them to see a project through from research to the development of products.





# Young people want to work, not wait

## A skilled, educated, economically supported youth is the bedrock of a strong democracy

The National Youth Development Agency continues to cement its position in being a major role player in empowering young people in South Africa. It centres its vision and mission on providing young people with links to their next opportunities for growth.

### The NYDA's strategy focuses on four core areas:

1. A passion for developing young entrepreneurs.
2. Supporting inclusive hiring through our JOBS programme.
3. Revitalising the National Youth Service for active citizenry.
4. Coordinating the Integrated Youth Development Strategy.

Youth entrepreneurship has a large role to play in combating unemployment. A recent report on township economies estimates the potential market value to South Africa's economy from its 500 major townships at R900 billion. This is potential that is largely unrealised: thanks to the distances and spatial exclusion of townships from central business districts, most of their businesses remain small scale and essentially survivalist, tending to circulate local resources rather than produce tradable goods and services that serve wider markets, create decent work opportunities and generate higher incomes.

The NYDA seeks to support youth micro-enterprises — young people who have dreams of owning their own businesses for the first time — supporting them with business management training, business development support, development finance, access to market programmes and mentorship. Over the course of the sixth administration more than 100 000 youth entrepreneurs have been supported, with more than 10 000 receiving financial support, creating more than 30 000 jobs.

Across sectors, employers who are prepared to redefine what a “good employee” looks like reap the rewards of inclusive hiring. Educational achievement doesn't tell the full story of potential. Many young unemployed people in South Africa did not have the chance to perform at their fullest potential at school, whether it was due to poor resources or the hard set of life circumstances they faced in childhood. Through the JOBS program, working with employers on the demand side to understand their recruitment challenges, and on the supply side with young people, making them more visible to the labour market and crowding in partners such as the Sector Education Training Authorities, more than 75 000 young people have been placed in sustainable jobs over the last five years.

There is a vast array of diverse young people ready and yearning to serve their country. Youth service plays a role in civic responsibility, in developing a common identity, recovery and rehabilitation and nation building. This is a passionate and idealistic generation that sees the urgency and need and wants to serve those around them. There is a wealth of work for them to do in public schools, reigniting forgotten after-school programmes, in tackling societal issues such as alcohol and substance abuse and GBV, and in building social solidarity in their communities. Over the last three years more than 70 000 young people have been enrolled in a paid National Youth Service, making it one of the largest NYS programmes globally.

### At an individual level NYS participants have:

- Formed identities as working persons: realising the importance of having obtained work (being paid) and having been provided with an introduction to the world of work.
- Enjoyed financial benefits; for the majority it was the first time they had a bank account or earned an income.
- Enjoyed greater self-reliance and self-confidence/increased assertiveness.
- Found service satisfaction from doing meaningful work.

At a community level, NYS participants have demonstrated agency and patriotism towards their community wellness and being part of change. They helped community ECD centres, supported schools with extra tutorial and life-skills, started and ran community gardens and ensured clean and safe spaces. There has been increased

awareness about early child learning: over 30 000 children benefited from ECD services daily, more than 27 000 farmers were assisted by NYS farm assistants and 96 000 young people accessed sports, recreation, and life skills activities/coaching sessions delivered by NYS participants. Economically, participants use their stipend money to contribute to the local economy by buying from local vendors and increasing the demand and supply for goods and services in their communities.

Prior to Youth Month, on 18 May the NYDA honoured hundreds of its graduates who have completed their various academic qualifications while being funded by the Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu Scholarship Fund. The fund was founded on 17 March 2014 in honour of the life of a stalwart whose life was cut short by the previous political regime. The NYDA, having engaged with the Mahlangu Family and finding out that Solomon — or “Solly” as they fondly called him — wanted to be a teacher, established this fund in his name, which has been a great honour for his family. Witnessing the tangible materialisation of his values and ideals, even post his brief time on this earth, is the greatest respect the NYDA can bestow upon him.

This year's Youth Day commemoration took place in the province of Limpopo, at the old Peter Mokaba Stadium located in Polokwane. The commemoration, under the theme “Actively embracing the socioeconomic gains of our democracy”, aimed to expose over 75 000 young people to 110 opportunity providers from various sectors in education, enterprise support, mentorship, banking and health facilities. Over the last two years, and post the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a reimagining of what the commemorative days ought to be like, as previous Youth Day approaches are no longer relevant to young people. The focus has instead become on having a large-scale career and opportunities expo for young people that offers them as many life opportunities as possible. Young people can relate to this more, as this is what interests them — opportunities for study, volunteerism, service, employment and entrepreneurship.

This Youth Month, we are reflecting on four years of transitioning young people from learning to earning. Central to the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI)'s efforts is the establishment of the National Pathway Management Network (NPMN) led by the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), a network-of-networks designed to support young people in navigating pathways into the economy.

To date, there are more than 4.4 million young people registered on the NPMN, and young people have accessed over 1.3 million earning opportunities, with the majority of these opportunities being accessed by young women, the most vulnerable and marginalised demographic in the labour market. The network brought together over 30 partners from the government, private sector and civil society, creating a comprehensive support system for young people.

A skilled, educated, economically supported population is the bedrock of a strong democracy. The involvement of young people in any formal economic activity fosters critical thinking, civic engagement, and a deeper understanding of South Africa's desired solutions to address its current low economic growth and triple challenge status. It empowers individuals to participate actively in democratic processes, ensuring that our government remains accountable and responsive to the needs of its people. As the country ushers in the seventh administration, it is crucial to put the needs of young people at the helm of its developmental agenda.

**Waseem Carrim**  
CEO - NYDA



NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
**OUR YOUTH. OUR FUTURE**







200 Young South Africans 2024

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP



## Kgothatso Moloto

Director

**K**gothatso Moloto, 32, is a chartered accountant and entrepreneur. He is the owner of Niche Parfums, which is based in Gauteng, and is involved in product development, managing the production team, as well as the sales and marketing team, and also developing the strategy for the brand. Kgothatso says more than anything he is motivated by the fact that he loves what he does and this pays off. Niche Parfums offers a range of products from reed diffusers and car air fresheners to a variety of perfumes for men, women and unisex. He is now in the process of streamlining and introducing a body care range. Additionally, Kgothatso is actively pursuing business expansion into other provinces, including the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. In his view, his greatest achievement was passing the chartered accounting board exams on his first attempt. Kgothatso says he has faced many challenges both as an audit trainee working to qualify as a chartered accountant and as an entrepreneur, but being solutions-oriented, he overcame these problems. Regarding the future, he says that given the high jobless rate among young people the prospect of his company being able to create employment opportunities for the youth is something that excites him.



## Lufuno Rasoesoe

Chief executive

**L**ufuno Rasoesoe is the chief executive of TOSH Detergents, a small but successful manufacturing company in Pretoria. It has not only thrived in a competitive market but also had a significant effect on the community. Among 35-year-old Lufuno's roles are strategic planning, operations management, team leadership, overseeing the production process and managing financial performance. She believes in creating a positive work environment, encouraging innovation and ensuring the well-being of her employees. "My goal is to balance long-term vision with day-to-day operations to sustain and expand the business successfully," she says. The company has overcome many hurdles, including stiff competition and having limited resources when it started. But Lufuno's determination and planning abilities helped to overcome them and the company has developed a high-quality product that is sold in leading retail stores. "One of the most fulfilling aspects of this journey has been the ability to employ the youth in my community. By providing job opportunities and fostering a supportive work environment, we've contributed to the local economy and helped young individuals develop valuable skills and gain employment," she says.



## Tshego Molefi & Ofentse Melato-Dube

**T**shego Molefi, 31, and Ofentse Melato-Dube, 34, are the founders of North West waste-management company Moli&Mela. It provides efficient, eco-friendly waste and recycling services to households and businesses, providing innovative and sustainable solutions that reduce waste, conserve natural resources and promote environmental stewardship. The first female (and black) business to be awarded a waste contract at Sun International's Sun City Resort, Moli&Mela gives jobs to 65 permanent and 100 part-time employees. It has also provided services at the annual Nedbank Golf Challenge. Although starting a business with no funding was difficult, because no bank would finance them, Tshego and Ofentse learnt how to use what they had to grow their business. "One lesson we learnt was that we should never underestimate ourselves or be defined by our backgrounds. And always work with what you have. Just start," they say. The pair are in the process of setting up a recycling facility that will provide employment and a source of income for more than 200 people in the Moses Kotane region of North West. "We are motivated by our employees. They rely on us to help them feed their families. That will always motivate us," they say.



## Eunice Maeshibe Marema

Military practitioner

**O**ne wouldn't expect a major in the South African Defence Force to be a barista, but that is exactly what Maeshibe Marema is. The major is also an entrepreneur who started Maeshibe Coffee, which roasts, packages and distributes coffee. She is also the officer responsible for diplomatic liaison with other military chiefs in all Southern African Development Community member states and has been with the military in various positions including being a combat trainer. Maeshibe, 35, says she is motivated by knowing that many girls and young women see it's possible to succeed in a male-dominated environment. She fell in love with coffee as a child because it was offered to visitors and gave a sense of belonging. Her entrepreneurial spirit was sparked by learning from her mother, who grows and sells vegetables. Maeshibe started selling tomatoes door-to-door at a young age. Maeshibe, who grew up in Zebediela in Limpopo, says she knew poverty and wanted to create something that gives back. Maeshibe Coffee employs deaf baristas and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. She says starting a business requires dedication and discipline, which she learnt from her 14 years of experience in the military.



## Aishwarya Bedessy

Founder and head of social media

**A**ishwarya Bedessy, 29, pioneered Yayarar South Africa's first fully customisable social commerce store and is head of social media at Ignition Group. She spearheads social media strategy and helps businesses achieve their goals and thrive in the digital economy. The achievement Aishwarya is most proud of is starting Yayarar at the age of 24, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Proving the naysayers wrong, she built a remote business, conducting consultations and measurements virtually. "My customers trusted me, a fledgling entrepreneur, to create their dream wedding outfits," she says. She is "thrilled" about Yayarar's new partnership with Phoenix Animal Care and Treatment Centre, launching the campaign Hit Paws On the Noise before the Hindu festival of Diwali, featuring animals in need and educating people about the use of fireworks. Five percent of every sale goes towards supporting the organisation. Throughout her career she's encountered the challenge of age. "Despite possessing the skills and experience, backed by tangible evidence of success, I've often had to work harder to prove myself due to being younger than my peers in similar positions," Aishwarya says. To overcome this, she relied on her unwavering dedication to producing outstanding results.



## Ayanda Vabaza-Mvandaba

Entrepreneur, chief executive and managing partner

**T**he latest project of self-proclaimed serial entrepreneur Ayanda Vabaza-Mvandaba, 33, is non-alcoholic beverage e-commerce company Drink Nil. It provides these beverages for festivals and events and develops tasting and pairing menus for the hospitality industry. As the chief executive and managing partner, Ayanda's role is to chart the strategic course for Drink Nil, aligning business goals with market trends and emerging opportunities. She is also a consultant under the banner of Kwandiso Consulting, the managing partner of Youth Bridge and the co-founder of the Langa Siphe Foundation. She is "proud to be involved with the Youth Bridge programme, which bridges the gap between unemployed youths in townships and their untapped potential", helping them to find jobs. "I am driven by the desire to leave a lasting legacy, not just of financial success, but of empowerment. I've opened doors for women, black and marginalised people, and I'm determined to keep building tables where everyone has a seat," says Ayanda. She is excited to be in the non-alcoholic beverages industry because they have the potential to revolutionise social gatherings, promote healthier lifestyles and offer inclusive options for those who choose not to consume alcohol.



## Sfundo Andile Gcaba

Founder and chief executive

**A**s the founder and chief executive of lighting company Litebruim Group, 25-year-old Sfundo Andile Gcaba's job entails overseeing everything from business development and financial management to team leadership and customer relations. Load-shedding was the inspiration for creating Litebruim. "Witnessing the disruption it caused, I was driven to create innovative lighting solutions with internal battery back-ups, providing continuous illumination during outages and helping communities navigate through challenging times," he says. Sustainability is important to the company and it is continuously seeking ways to minimise its environmental footprint and maximise energy efficiency through cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices. "At our lighting business, we're not just illuminating spaces; we're illuminating the future," he says. Sfundo is involved in projects focused on smart energy and water-management systems that optimise energy and water usage, reduce waste and enhance efficiency. He says: "What excites me most is the potential to create transformative solutions that address pressing global challenges, from climate change to resource scarcity."



## Anje Yamo Nene

Director

**A**nje Yamo Nene, 32, is the founder and chief executive of the Nenes franchise, which offers that uniquely South Africa speciality — kasi-style kotas, but with a Nene twist. Anje didn't have a background in the food and restaurant business but quickly learnt. When Covid struck he had to open outlets closer to Nenes' customers. One of his achievements is taking the business from trailer outlets into malls, a move that was "scary" at first. He says the requirements for running a trailer restaurant and a mall restaurant are very different and they had to quickly make the required adjustments. Nenes now has two branches in Midrand, three in Johannesburg and one in Pretoria. Anje's job at the broad level involves deciding on and implementing the direction the business will take. On a day-to-day basis he meets store managers, suppliers, mall centre managers, construction and marketing teams and franchisees. Anje believes in being hands-on so he goes to the Nene branches to interact with customers to see what problems there might be and the changes they require. For Anje, what is most exciting is taking the mostly informal kota market mainstream. He envisions the kota becoming a global product just like burgers and pizzas.







200 Young South Africans 2024

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP



## Fikile Ndaba

Self-employed

**F**ikile Ndaba, who is an accountant, is the founder and owner of Fifi & Son Pies, a business she established in February last year in Kroondal, near Rustenburg. She then expanded to Ga-Rankuwa township because of the success of her first business. Fikile, 33, is responsible for the management of Fifi & Son Pies and oversees its financial growth. She says his biggest achievement is opening a pie business in a township, because these are oversupplied with kota shops. "That was my biggest project because I am stepping into something that looked very unlikely to be a success. For example, who would buy a pie in the township instead of a kota?" she asks. God motivates Fikile and gives her strength to excel in her endeavours, saying that "being in partnership with God helps me a lot". Her main challenge was finding the funding to start the venture, because, as she says, few institutions will fund start-ups such as hers. She overcame this problem by using the profits from her accounting business to fund the pie business. Then she used the profits from the first pie outlet to start the second one in the township. Fikile also started the Enzo Foundation, named after her son, which provides school shoes for disadvantaged children.



## Tamara Magwashu

Founder

**T**amara Magwashu, 28, is a young entrepreneur who started Azosule Feminine Hygiene Products, a company that produces sanitary pads. Growing up in the Eastern Cape many girls, including herself, missed school because they did not have menstrual products. This inspired Tamara to start her company, which also informs people about menstrual health. The company provides employment for local women. What motivates her is knowing that her work helps ensure girls go to school and contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty. Tamara has faced difficulties in her venture, including financial constraints, social stigma about menstruation, and the difficulty of breaking into the market as a young black female entrepreneur. She started her business through crowdfunding and also applied for grants for social enterprises and women-led businesses. Her mentor and role model is Jon Hegeman, whose belief in her vision and his leverage of his network inspired her. Tamara's big achievement is being featured on BBC News on 28 May, Menstrual Hygiene Day, in 2023, which brought attention to her business of eradicating period poverty. Another achievement was opening a warehouse, which helped to increase production and employ youth from her community.



## Margo Faith Fargo

Entrepreneur, model and sustainability advocate

**M**argo Faith Fargo, 32, is a model who has used her career to promote environmental sustainability. She is the founder of two start-up companies operating under the group Margo Fargo International. Far\_Go straws is a sustainable steel straw company that specialises in personalising and supplying a plastic-free alternative. Grinda Coffee is a proudly South African company that specialises in roasting African grown coffee beans from Uganda and Ethiopia to small hotels and holds pop-up events with other companies. Margo's work involves marketing decisions for renewable energy companies and small businesses to elevate their messages. As a model she is not only in front of the camera; she uses her influence to champion sustainable practices in the fashion industry. Margo, who has a BSc Honours in consumer sciences in sustainability, works with companies such as the Cotton On Foundation and Polo South Africa that have given her a platform to champion environmental initiatives. She is also involved in recycling projects at schools and solar garden projects with educational institutions. Margo also works with a global foundation on a reforestation project.



## Gontse Naledi Chuma

Medical aesthetician

**G**ontse Naledi Chuma, 24, is the owner of Blinqué Beauty Bar. She is also its manager, marketer and accountant. And she works full time as a beauty artist and employs two other artists. Gontse says she makes women of all ages and races look and feel their best with her lash and brow services and now as a dermal aesthetics graduate she will do medically graded non-invasive skin treatments. This all started when she decided to drop out of her civil engineering course and pursue a career she has always been interested in. Gontse enrolled and completed her international diploma in dermal aesthetics "so I could be better educated about cosmetic chemistry, dermatology and all matters of the skin". It was while she was still studying that she started her business in a small rented room at the age of 21. Today Gontse has a client base of more than 1 000 people from Gauteng, Limpopo and North West. She now rents a four-room office in Pretoria, employs three people and has openings for five other jobs. Gontse believes that the more young people become entrepreneurs, rather than fruitlessly searching for employment, the more jobs they can create for skilled but unemployed people.



## Christiaan van den Berg & Heine Bellingan

Co-founders

**C**hristiaan van den Berg, 30, and Heine Bellingan, 32, are co-founders of Jobjack, a platform enabling entry-level job seekers to find work. They now have a team of 50+ people and they have assisted more than 20 000 people this year alone to find jobs in a country where the average job seeker has about four dependants, thus affecting the lives of 100 000 people. Not bad for a company that started out in Heine's apartment with a laptop and a desk. The Jobjack platform replaces job seekers' cost of about R938 a month to print and drop off CVs. Christiaan and Heine use psychometric assessments they developed to facilitate sustainable job-matching between the job seeker and companies such as PEP, Food Lover's Market, KFC, McDonald's, Lewis, Woolworths and others. Christiaan says one of his challenges was his age (24) when they started their business but he soon realised that most people are figuring it out as they go, regardless of their age. He and Heine focus on motivating the team to achieve the company's vision to "Employ the World". The two say everyone has specific strengths, and they use theirs to help those who need it most in a country that has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world and where everyone needs a chance.



## Courtney Hodgson

Creative entrepreneur, illustrator, designer and owner

**C**ourtney Hodgson, 25, is the owner of Kiffkak. She designs and manufactures all of the products, creates content, oversees all operations and drives growth of the business through cultivating new opportunities. Courtney is always on the lookout for new and innovative opportunities to start businesses that fill gaps in South Africa's creative landscape. She is also a freelance creative — illustrator, designer, copywriter, voice-over artist and video editor — who helps businesses reach their full potential with innovative solutions. South African culture is her biggest inspiration. A big part of the Kiffkak brand is creating humorous products that show uniquely local imagery and copywriting that reflects South African culture. Her biggest challenge has been having to save up enough capital to start her business and then to generate enough work to keep the company going. The other challenge in a small business is to find the balance between all the hats she wears such as social media manager, creative lead, customer liaison, salesperson, bookkeeper and inventory manager. Courtney says she has the "kiffest" customers and if Kiffkak continues to make people smile, laugh and celebrate South Africa she will remain motivated.



## Iman Ganijee

Entrepreneur, creative director, brand builder

**I**man Ganijee, 30, an entrepreneur committed to sustainable fashion and social progress, co-leads the brand Sari for Change with her mother, her mentor and role model. Together they pioneered a circular economy model by repurposing saris into unique pieces, while addressing societal concerns. Central to Sari for Change's ethos is Iman's commitment to waste reduction. She is the business developer and creative director of Sari for Change while also running her agency — The Alternative — which mentors youth in digital skills and entrepreneurship. She says recognition at COP28 for advancing circular economies and Sari for Change's partnership with Pick n Pay Clothing stand as testament to their effectiveness. She is also proud of the difference Sari for Change has made by empowering 120 women to self-sufficiency, while salvaging 15 000 saris from landfills and repurposing more than 8 000 into innovative products. Her latest creation, the Imanii Puffer, made from Maasai blankets and saris, is a symbol of cultural fusion. Iman says this was inspired by her background: born in Kenya to a Yemeni-Indian father and Indian-Malay South African mother.



## Bonga Masoka

Director

**B**onga Masoka, 33, is the founding director at Splash Coatings Africa, one of South Africa's fastest-growing paint brands. It is a Johannesburg-based affordable premium paint manufacturing, retail and applications and services company. Its products are available from two stores in Soweto and Soshanguve, a warehouse in Midrand and online through Takealot. Bonga completed his BSc and built his company despite being raised by a single mother who sold food on the roadside and who died before she could build a home of her own. Therefore his motivation is to provide his family and the company's employees with more choices in life, such as about where to live, the education of their children, healthcare and security. Bonga says: "Much of the potential in this country is lost as a result of it being narrowly defined and limited to resilience and overcoming hardships." For this reason his company has an initiative called One Bucket Splashed Dreams, which is renovating grade one classrooms in Soweto. So far they have completed 25 classrooms and four schools. Another achievement is that Splash Coatings Africa has been nominated for the Top16 Youth Owned Brands Award in the manufacturing category.





# UNIQ FINISHING SCHOOL ELEVATES YOUR ELEGANCE, PROFESSIONALISM AND POISE

Enhance your confidence, your social skills and the success of your business

**A**t six years old, I sat sprawled on the rug when mom's voice boomed: "Sit up straight and close your legs; you're wearing a dress!" The sudden command left me confused. I didn't understand why my posture or legs mattered when I wore a dress.

Mothers have a knack for imparting essential social graces, often through direct instructions rather than elaborate explanations. Directives such as "chew with your mouth closed!" or "don't speak with food in your mouth!" may initially leave us bewildered. However, these seemingly blunt pronouncements gradually instil the necessary social etiquette, even if the learning process isn't always straightforward.

Somehow, time steals from our behaviours, and we often don't consciously think about how we conduct ourselves or the image we're presenting to the world. Etiquette and social graces have a profound impact on how others perceive us. It's about more than just appearances: imagine meeting someone undeniably attractive, someone who initially captures your attention. But then, during the conversation, they pick their nose. Suddenly, that initial attraction might diminish. It's a reminder that good manners and social awareness are vital parts of making a positive impression. While physical attractiveness draws us in initially, etiquette fosters genuine connection and respect.

In today's interconnected world, the nuances of etiquette are more relevant than ever. These skills transcend basic manners, encompassing a broad spectrum of social, professional, and personal behaviours that collectively contribute to an individual's success and wellbeing.

Etiquette refers to the conventional norms and rules governing polite behaviour in society. It includes everything from table manners and conversational skills to professional conduct and digital etiquette.

Understanding and practising good etiquette is crucial for building and maintaining relationships, fostering respect, and navigating various social situations easily. Finishing involves refining personal, social, and professional skills to achieve a polished and sophisticated demeanour.

This includes personal grooming, style, communication abilities, and cultural awareness. Finishing helps individuals present themselves confidently and competently in any scenario.

The Uniq Finishing School's mantra elevates your elegance, professionalism and poise, but the foundation of the business, the essence of why it was built is simple: the three C's of competence, confidence and communication.

Mastering etiquette and finishing boosts personal confidence. When individuals know how to present themselves well and handle various social situations, they feel more self-assured. This confidence can lead to greater opportunities and a more fulfilling personal and professional life.

Understanding etiquette and the art of finishing is more than just knowing which fork to use at a dinner party. These skills



are integral to personal and professional success, fostering respectful and effective interactions across various contexts. In a world where first impressions matter and cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred, the ability to navigate social norms with grace and sophistication is invaluable.

The benefits of etiquette and the art of finishing include enhanced personal development, enhanced social skills and building relationships, enhanced cultural awareness and of course professional success. It's important to remember that etiquette is not about rigid rules or creating a fake persona.

Investing in etiquette and finishing education is an investment; it's taking responsibility for your personal brand, your development, enhanced confidence and success.

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# The Netflix effect

South Africa's youth take centre stage in film boom



**Katleho Ramaphakela**  
Managing Director of Burnt Onion  
Productions



**Sibusisiwe Gugu Manqele**  
Multidisciplinary Artist, Scholar, Social  
Entrepreneur



**Tendeka Matatu**  
Netflix Director of Content, Africa

## Jamaine Krige

South Africa's film and television industry is exploding with potential, unleashing a creative revolution and rewriting the script for the country's youth. Amid the industry's blockbuster boom, content executives and aspiring creatives are faced with exciting prospects and significant challenges, grappling with the question: can the industry's talent pipeline keep pace with skyrocketing demand? Fortunately, streaming titan Netflix is well-poised to ensure that the answer to that question is a resounding yes.

This is according to Netflix's Director of Content for Africa Tendeka Matatu. While exciting, he says this surge has exposed a critical need to expand the talent pool: "The value chain of any production is so vast, even though most people only think of the actors, directors, writers and producers."

At the end of a film or series, he suggests staying glued to the screen as the credits roll: "Every name you see is a job, and every job is done by a person. From camera and sound operators, set builders and decorators, wardrobe crew, lighting technicians and hair and make-up artists to caterers, accountants, lawyers and drivers, and of course post-production, VFX and special effects ... the industry's ecosystem is rich and diverse and brimming with opportunities."

## Beyond entertainment

The impact of a thriving film industry extends far beyond entertainment, contributing significantly to employment and economic development. The streamer's international production *One Piece*, filmed in Cape Town, saw Netflix spend \$48.7 million (approximately R897 million) with 625 local service suppliers, mostly SMMEs. "This was our biggest ever production in Africa, and *One Piece* created 1 000 full-time equivalent jobs, of which 27% went to women," Matatu explains, adding that even more people are employed in film-adjacent sectors such as hospitality, accommodation and transport.

The industry also plays a significant role in boosting tourism. Netflix's Cultural Affinity Survey revealed international viewers of South African content were 3.1 times more likely to visit the country on their next holiday. "Audiences also showed an increased affinity towards South African culture, languages, locations, foods, music and people, which has a knock-on effect across many sectors and ultimately contributes towards the growth of the national economy."

## Upskill and re-skill for success

Amid these opportunities, however, the world is changing and the industry is evolving, driven in part by rapid technological advancement: "This is why it is important to constantly seek excellence, find ways to upskill oneself and be open to learning and honing your craft. The most successful industry players are adaptable, versatile, resilient and always open to learning."

Katleho Ramaphakela, Managing Director of Burnt Onion Productions, embodies these qualities, which he says helped him navigate industry challenges to emerge as a successful writer, director and producer — despite never having studied film. "Everything I know came from on-the-job training."

Now known for his work on fan favourites like *Seriously Single*, *How to Ruin Christmas* and *How to Ruin Love*, Ramaphakela's industry journey began on camera as an actor. Driven by curiosity, he expanded his skillset, laying the foundation for his current role: "My passion grew to want to know more about the other facets of TV production, so I took it upon myself to train and learn about the work going on behind the scenes."

Sibusisiwe Gugu Manqele is another multi-talented artist whose ability to adapt and evolve has facilitated her success as an actress, director, writer, producer and scholar. Her career also started on-screen with lifestyle and reality shows, eventually leading her to promo directing, voiceovers, and scriptwriting for dramas and telenovelas, including local classics like *Skeem Saam*, *House of Zwide* and *Gomora*.

Regardless of her role in the production process, Manqele's motivation has always been rooted in the power of storytelling. "Stories are a good way to educate and entertain," she says. "Messaging comes through beautifully in stories reflecting our society."

## Overcoming barriers to entry

Both creatives agree that breaking into the industry can be challenging. Manqele recounts relentlessly knocking on doors; her persistence and perseverance eventually paid off when she was offered a role as an assistant on a SABC show. She soon found her business skills and industry knowledge sorely lacking. "I had to learn a lot on the ground," she admits. "Formal education can sharpen creative skills, but business training still lacks in many curricula."

As a young, black-owned company, Ramaphakela says Burnt Onion Productions also faced significant barriers, particularly in accessing financing and social capital. These obstacles, while daunting, fostered resilience and innovative problem-solving skills.

According to Matatu, the rise of paid internships, training academies, and industry initiatives helps bridge some gaps and provide much-needed support for aspiring creatives. One example is Netflix's Grow Creative, "which consists of a team of champions whose sole focus is to find and drive initiatives in local production industries to upskill and strengthen the talent pipeline".

Under the Grow umbrella, the Creative Equity Scholarship Fund was established to assist aspiring young creatives to access institutions of higher learning and complete their studies. The streamer teamed up with the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts to offer a series of workshops and masterclasses to local creatives to upskill and re-skill in various disciplines in production.

## Opportunities abound

The streamer also partnered with UNESCO to host a short film competition for emerging talent. In *African Folktales*, *Reimagined*, six young filmmakers from across the continent paired with professional mentors and were supported during the creation and production of their films, which are now streaming on Netflix.

Manqele says young people breaking into the industry should utilise these and other resources, like guilds, workshops and social media platforms, where established creatives share their expertise. "It's imperative to seek out this knowledge and these spaces."

Ramaphakela agrees, adding that in this digital age, aspiring creatives have unprecedented access to resources and information. From screenplays to acting tips, directing techniques to editing skills — all are available at one's fingertips.

They also stress the importance of on-the-job training, encouraging young entrants to seek internships and hands-on experiences on set. And while Ramaphakela sees potential in the growing support from government and private sector players like Netflix, he says more support is needed to create a sustainable culture of nurturing young talent.

## Stepping in to fill the gaps

As technology rapidly advances and AI and automation loom on the industry horizon, staying updated with emerging trends becomes crucial. And while technical skills are important, soft skills and leadership are often overlooked. "This is actually where the fundamental gaps in the industry are," Ramaphakela observes. "Our space is a creative one, and we tend to find that heads of department never get to advance their managerial and financial management skills."

This, says Matatu, underscores the need for a holistic approach to professional development, balancing creative talents with practical management abilities. "Communication skills and time management in the industry are vitally important; in an environment where budgets and deadlines reign supreme, effective communication and time management can make or break a production."

According to Manqele, emotional intelligence and problem-solving are also essential. Self-awareness, the ability to learn from mistakes and the drive to leverage every opportunity allowed her to pivot and adapt. She says self-motivation and a visionary mindset can drive individuals to create opportunities and bring about change where representation is still lacking.

Young creatives should embrace these skills, work collaboratively with peers, and maintain a strong support system to safeguard their mental health in an industry known for its highs and lows. "You need to know yourself and understand yourself within this industry," she advises.

## To greater heights

As South Africa's film industry flourishes, it offers untold opportunities for those willing to learn, adapt, and bring their unique perspectives to the table. The next generation of film professionals will not only shape the stories that dominate our screens and our conversations; they will also contribute to the country's cultural and economic landscape in profound ways.

As the creative economy continues to evolve, the path to success lies in embracing diversity, being open to new opportunities while honing existing competencies, and developing a balance of creative talent, practical skills and leadership abilities. For youth looking to make their mark, the message is clear: be curious, be adaptable, and never stop learning.

# NETFLIX



A vertical beam of light, composed of red, pink, blue, and purple rays, shines down from the top of the frame onto a dark, reflective surface. The background is a deep blue night sky filled with stars. The light beam creates a shimmering reflection on the surface below.

**You're always ready to go over and above...**

So now we celebrate your brilliance and beyond.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**NETFLIX**





Goodman Lepota

Founder of Preamble and a senior accounts manager

Goodman Lepota, 30, kicked off his career at Google as the senior accounts manager, and in 2022, he founded Preamble, a data-based geopolitics and business insights platform about Africa. It uses long-form documentary series videos and short-form videos to explore key topics about business in Africa. Preamble's videos have had more than a million views on YouTube and reached over 1.3 million accounts on Instagram. Goodman is continuously seeking ways to improve his business and unleash the potential of South Africa and its people, and believes that his contribution to the national dialogue is as essential as any other person's. As someone who grew up in a township in Johannesburg, but left the country to study in New York, Goodman says that he hopes that the information on Preamble provides crucial knowledge and skills to the people in the country and those living outside of South Africa to understand the world, and that the estimated one million South Africans living and gaining skills abroad will someday return to the country. He says the next steps for the platform is to learn how to build revenue and see it grow from strength to strength.



Zola Ayabulela Mhlongo

Radio and TV presenter, actress and entrepreneur

As a radio and TV presenter, actress and entrepreneur, 31-year-old Zola Ayabulela Mhlongo works for Metro FM and is the founder of the brand Undefined Shapes. She hosts radio shows, has acted in diverse roles in films and on television and, as an influencer, connects with a wide audience on social media, sharing personal insights, promoting brands and collaborating with companies for marketing campaigns. Zola is motivated by the desire to have a positive and meaningful effect on people's lives. "I think we all have something important to contribute to this world and I am constantly looking to see how I can contribute, whether it is through entertaining or telling stories as an actress," she says. She would like to inspire the youth to achieve their dreams. "By actively participating in social and political movements, young people can advocate for policy changes, social justice and improved governance," she says. Zola also sees the youth using technology to develop new platforms, apps and tech solutions that address issues such as healthcare, education and sustainability and driving economic growth. Her advice to her younger self would be that "self-doubt is your biggest enemy, so be confident".



Itumeleng Mpofo

Scholarly communication and publishing

Information sharing is at the centre of Itumeleng Mpofo's work. First, at OpenUCT, Itumeleng, 29, is responsible for archiving institutional research, open educational resources and electronic theses and dissertations. He is also involved in the African Platform for Open Scholarship, which contributes to the growth and development of local research, fostering advancement in African society. In his personal capacity, Itumeleng founded Break It Down, a social media platform dedicated to simplifying complex political, economic and social issues. Break It Down serves as a tool for social activism and uses social media to engage directly with the youth, educating the public and inspiring social activism to foster active citizenship. Itumeleng also co-founded I Care SA and holds the position of head of policy analysis. He is responsible for writing recommendations for the parliamentary committee to ensure policies reflect the needs of citizens, particularly those from marginalised communities. As a member of the Wikipedia Chapter of South Africa, he focuses on expanding its reach to township schools to promote educational equity and enhance social justice.



Godisamang Khunou

Film director, producer and owner

Making the voices of black African women and the queer community heard is the goal of film director and producer Godisamang Khunou, 32. Her award-winning documentary feature, *Black Women and Sex*, won her international acclaim and pushed her into the limelight. It focused on controversial topics and exposed the negative influences of patriarchy in Africa, as did her follow-up, *Sharp End of a Knife*, which details the lives of women who were imprisoned for killing their abusive partners. Godisamang was inspired by her grandmother, Mologadi Fatima Khoza, who raised her from the age of eight when her mother died. She learned to believe in herself and, together with the help of her strength coach Julia Makhubela, gained the confidence she needed to start her own film company, Mogale Pictures. The next big step was learning to collaborate with others to create films and raise funds for future projects that she believes will contribute to the growth of African film. The young filmmaker will study in the US and do community service as part of being a Mandela Washington Fellow, where she will also network and grow Mogale Pictures. "I will be in a business track at Rodgers University, to grow my business for the American market."



Mnqobi Mhleli Kwaz'kwenkosi Kunene

Actor

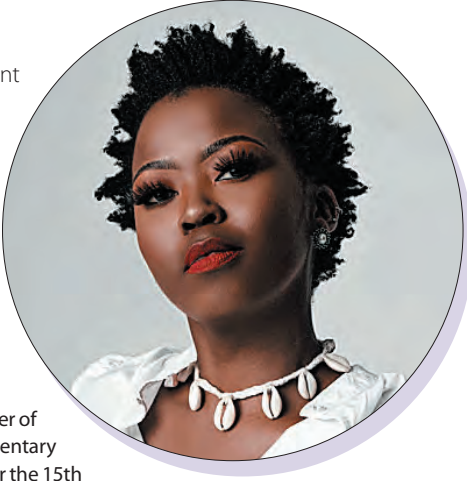
As a young boy from the rural community of Mondlo in KwaZulu-Natal, Mnqobi Kunene, 33, dreamt of pursuing a career in sport and physical health, but after his parents' demise, he didn't have much guidance and support, and he decided to put his dreams on hold and study IT because it was the safer option. Mnqobi picked up his dreams again. In 2018, he and a group of friends started a fitness community called Zulutransformerz in Glenwood, Durban, where they offered free training sessions to encourage people to maintain good health practices, which he continued doing virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mnqobi stretched his horizons and did modelling, television and took acting classes and is now a budding actor, who seeks to share the stories and complex experiences of South African men through his craft. He is working on productions and upcoming films. Mnqobi appeared on the cover of *Men's Health* magazine twice and hopes to establish a health and fitness facility. He defines his life through two core beliefs: making people feel good about themselves and doing something today that your future self will be grateful for.



Nontobeko Yamantungwa Sibisi

Storyteller, TV and film producer and creative consultant

Nontobeko Yamantungwa Sibisi, 35, has a knack for telling stories that convey indigenous, historical and cultural knowledge about the African experience. She founded Okay Sho! Media, a storytelling and media production company that explores themes of belonging, community and identity through an African communal lens. In 2020, she led a team at Okay Sho! Media to conceptualise, develop and produce the first virtual National Arts Festival. Her work is influenced by the intuitive pull towards ideas that inspire change and that advocate for social justice and human rights issues, especially among marginalised people. Nontobeko is a member of the Independent Producers Organisation and the Documentary Filmmakers Association. She was also recently selected for the 15th Edition of Talents Berlinale Durban, A Berlin International Film Festival Initiative, and is part of a cohort of sub-Saharan storytellers on a 2022-23 DW Akademie Fellowship. In 2016, Nontobeko's stand against a news channel's decision to remove her segment off TV because she was wearing a doek sparked the #RespekTheDoek movement, which highlighted that organisations need to do more to become culturally aware and inclusive.



Daniel Steyn

Journalist, author and documentary filmmaker

Daniel Steyn was one of the journalists at *GroundUp* who broke the Thabo Bester story in 2023 that sent ripples through the nation, and which continues to top headlines in South Africa today. At 27, Daniel has already co-authored a book, titled *The Thabo Bester Story*, and consulted on a Showmax Original docu-series called *Tracking Thabo Bester*. Daniel is working on his second book at the moment. His academic background in film and television studies has also given him the opportunity to direct two episodes of the Showmax Original docu-series *The Illuminated*, which explores alternative and often controversial religious movements in South Africa. Daniel gets his thrill and motivation from investigating issues in South Africa that expose how the decisions made by powerful people affect the most vulnerable, and uncovering truths that result in holding powerful figures accountable for their actions "The reason I got into journalism in the first place wasn't to be recognised, to be famous or rich, it was to tell stories and to hold powerful people to account," he says. When the going gets tough in the creative field, Daniel reminds himself that it's important to take constructive criticism in your stride instead of letting it hold you back.



‘When people ask me if I went to film school I tell them, “No, I went to films.”’

Director Quentin Tarantino





Bongani Morgan  
Film and commercials director

**B**elieve in the power of your dreams, says film director Bongani Morgan, 29, who has certainly acted upon his own advice. The AFDA graduate who works for Spitfire Films has directed a number of award-winning TV shows and three documentaries, but his proudest achievement was using the power of film to change young people's lives. During the making of a documentary on Springbok rugby player Makazole Mapimpi, the film crew discovered that his alma mater, Jim Mvabaza Secondary School, had become run-down, so the children of Twecu Village had to attend other schools that were far away. The school was refurbished and opened again in 2024, which "transcended every accolade my films have received", says Bongani. He dedicates his spare time to empowering children who are interested in filmmaking through the Alexandra Education Committee. Bongani is excited by the "future wave" of young creatives in his field, who he says have powerful convictions — and this bodes well for the future of the film industry. He believes that the youth are open-minded enough to blend innovation with tradition, and rates the greatest achievement of South Africa in the past 30 years as the meteoric rise of its arts, culture and creatives.



Fezeka Mkhabela  
Writer and film producer

**I**n the past few years, the film production company Ingwe Studios created 56 jobs in the film industry. It was founded and run by Fezeka Mkhabela, 28, who oversees the entire production process, from conception to production to distribution — and she also liaises with funders on the financing of projects. She learned a great deal during the production of her debut television film *Ubuhle Bendalo*, which was aired on Mzansi Magic in 2023. Fezeka was pushed into a television producer role, which involved project management, strategic leadership and learning how to solve problems fast. It was a lot of pressure, but it radically improved her entrepreneurial and filmmaking skills. Fezeka has learned to not be afraid of failure, because, as she says, our biggest lessons come from our shortcomings. Fezeka, who is also an author, is busy with the poetic documentary film *Kazi: To Live and Die a Woman*, which examines how ancient Zulu culture revered women — something many seem to have forgotten today. She is excited to be part of a cohort of young filmmakers who are making authentic African stories globally accessible, and hopes that her film will remind black women of their greatness.



Palesa Tembe  
On-air broadcaster

**P**alesa Tembe, 33, is a television presenter for three on-air shows — *Afternoon Express* on SABC 3 and The Home Channel's *Afrimaxx* and *Finest Homes*. She is driven by her love of storytelling — telling important and unheard stories that can inspire change. A challenge she has overcome is being dyslexic in a career where reading is important. "Reading an autocue or teleprompter live was my worst nightmare and made me instantly anxious," she says. Palesa overcame this by applying the maxims she grew up with: "Practice makes perfect" and "Perseverance is the key to success". Palesa is proud of being the ambassador for Panado's A Dose of Care campaign, which helps nonprofit organisations by organising soup kitchens, community gardens, animal shelters and orphanages around the country. It was "a reminder that humanity is not lost, and the concept of ubuntu is still at the cornerstone of us, as South Africans. It challenged and inspired me to question what I am doing daily to share a dose of care with those around me," she says. Palesa is excited by the future the youth can create: "We have capable youths who are committed to pulling up a seat at the table and respectfully helping to make meaningful change in our country."



Azaria Khoza  
TV presenter and producer

**T**he personal achievement that makes Azaria Khoza, 31, most proud is becoming a producer on the same show on which he was a presenter in 2018. *Kids News Room*, aired on SABC2, provides a platform for young and upcoming dancers, singers and poets between the ages of seven and 16, and it also encourages children to express themselves on how they see the world around them. It's the perfect fusion of entertainment and education. He also presents on an SABC1 programme called *Expressions*, which also empowers South Africa's youth. Azaria believes that we should act on our intuition more, and that acting upon it means taking baby steps to start with, and turning around and facing up to our fears. He is inspired to become the best person he possibly can be and to keep growing in his career for the rest of his life because of his background in the township. In his opinion, the future of the entertainment industry in this country is exciting and dynamic. New technologies are changing production processes and how content is distributed. South African TV personalities are becoming more involved in international productions, which means their influence is increasingly extending beyond our borders.



Lungelo Mdletshe  
The podcaster engineer

**L**ungelo Mdletshe, 29, is a professional engineer and transforms people's lives through his infrastructural projects, one of which was the construction of KwaZulu-Natal Children's Hospital, the first public sector hospital in KwaZulu-Natal dedicated to providing healthcare to children. But there is another side to Lungelo, for which he is better known. He is the man behind *Engineer Your Life* with Lungelo KM, producing podcasts. Amid the noise and controversy Lungelo's work has been a shining light in the greater South African community. This is because his platform aims to to educate, provide growth and facilitate healing conversations through intriguing and intricate conversations with personalities from different sectors. Boasting 2.2 million YouTube views and half a million audio streaming platform listens, the podcast resonates with the South African and diaspora audience. Inspiring conversations with Baby Cele, Nelisiwe Sibiyi, Nonku Williams, Sipho Hotstix Mabuse, mental health activists and more have been at the centre of the 90 episodes that have been released weekly since March 2022. You simply have to login to [www.youtube.com/@engineerylshow](https://www.youtube.com/@engineerylshow) to witness the positive effect that these healing conversations have contributed to the mental emancipation of the audience. Lungelo KM facilitates phenomenal conversations that navigate the engineering of one's life.



Mhlontlo Buhle Geleba  
TV producer and postdoctoral researcher

**M**hlontlo Buhle Geleba has always had the dream of speaking and talking to people on radio and television, and now it has become a reality. The 24-year-old began broadcasting on a community radio in Mdantsane township in the Eastern Cape at the age of 12, and through hard work and sheer determination has now become one of the youngest television anchors and producers on public broadcaster SABC. Recently Mhlontlo covered the 2024 national elections in a show called *Elections 360 Daily*, which helped people understand what the elections were about, and provided them with the opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences of it. She's a producer for a local show called *Kids Newsroom*, which enables children to participate in the national discourse. Mhlontlo is also involved in an initiative organised by the United Nations Population Fund called the Youth Advisory Panel, which empowers the youth by giving them a platform to express their views on issues such as human rights. Mhlontlo believes that education is key to reducing the inequality gap in South Africa, and that intersectoral initiatives are the way to develop the country and its young people. She wants to ensure that the media industry is one where people can have viable careers.



**'A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the blandishments of government officials. It must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or favour. It must enjoy the protection of the Constitution, so that it can protect our rights as citizens.'**

Nelson Mandela, February 1994, at the start of democracy in South Africa





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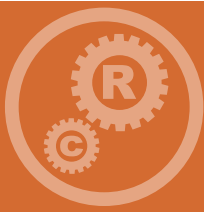
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200 Young South Africans 2024

# FINANCIAL SERVICES



**Zama Dikana**  
Regional manager

**Z**ama Dikana, 32, is a regional manager at Old Mutual and leads a team of six business managers, who each have teams of about 20 financial planners. The region is among the biggest in the country with about 10 000 clients and R11 billion in assets under management. Zama is also a member of the regional executive committee and the provincial management board and contributes towards the leadership, direction and sales strategy of the region. His main responsibilities include setting the region's business plan targets, sales and recruitment strategies, market share and client retention strategies. Zama is also accountable for compliant financial advice practices, risk management and operations. He works collaboratively across different distribution channels to optimise synergies and opportunities. The one achievement Zama is most proud of is being the youngest regional manager in the biggest tied distribution channel in the industry. He was entrusted with the responsibility of leading one of the biggest regions in the country, which included some of the most successful financial planners in the industry. Zama is also involved in upliftment programmes through the provincial management board, most of which are school projects and financial literacy programmes.



**Thembisa Vanesa Luthuli**  
Instructional design specialist

**T**hembisa Vanesa Luthuli, 34, is an instructional designer at Sanlam. Her responsibilities include developing and running training courses to meet identified needs and to monitor results so that future courses may be modified. Thembisa assists in the assessment of external courses to determine suitability and keeps abreast of latest developments in the training field. She also does research based on the training development brief. Being the youngest and first black woman to start a financial planning practice in one of the biggest financial institutions is an achievement that Thembisa is proud of. Part of the challenge was to service the black market in a white-dominated company. Her other great achievement was writing a book called *Healing Financial Trauma: Gateway to Wealth*. Thembisa says she overcame difficulties such as gender and racial bias by demonstrating her expertise, seeking mentorship and being part of a supportive network. She says she draws motivation from the people who have trust in her capabilities, adding that "we grow from learning from those who are ahead of us". Thembisa has a personal project and it is to develop a financial wellness programme for use by employers in South Africa.



**Nkateko Nkhwashi**  
Regulatory adviser

**N**kateko Nkhwashi, 33, is a regulatory adviser at the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA). As part of his job, Nkateko attends to the drafting and interpretation of relevant subordinate legislation and legal opinions for the financial services sector. He also attends to queries that pertain to the proper interpretation of the relevant legislative prescripts, including issuing guidance, directives and industry communications. Nkateko is the author of *A Lawyer Who Never*, which explores unconventional views of the legal profession and other career prospects in areas of specialisation other than the traditional court law route. He was part of a team that worked to pass the Financial Sector Regulation Act 9 of 2017, which changed the regulatory framework of South Africa to adopt international best practices and standards to attract foreign direct investments. Nkateko says that to build his work profile he volunteered at a number of places such as the Victim Empowerment Centre at Johannesburg Central police station. His second book, *The Advocate's Journey Into Financial Services Regulatory Law*, seeks to benefit those interested in the field. Nkateko is working on his third book, *Banking Conduct Risk Regulation and Supervision*.



**Merishka Harilall**  
Co-founder and chief executive

**M**erishka Harilall, 28, is the co-founder and the chief executive of Spenda Holdings, a financial technology business. Her job entails shaping the vision of the Spenda SA business by creating plans and executing various business strategies where she "wears multiple hats". The last few years have made her an excellent problem-solver and she has the ability to adapt to big changes. Merishka is leading a team to create mobile and digital payment products that serve the underbanked in Africa. Her company has just launched a mobile application, Spenda Scan to Pay, on the South African market. This app allows users to purchase vouchers on the Spenda SA website and to pay at more than 6 000 merchant locations across the country. She manages all the moving parts needed to launch products to markets to improve daily. Merishka says that by providing essential financial tools to underserved areas, people are empowered because they can now improve their financial stability and quality of life. She is also involved in the International Women's Forum South Africa, the Young Leaders Connect Entrepreneurship Programme. Merishka says she is motivated by her ability to solve problems and help change the lives of others.



**Andile Buthelezi**  
Equity analyst

**A**ndile Buthelezi, 31, heads the resources sector as part of the investment team at Sentio Capital. He is an equity analyst covering publicly listed companies across global financial markets. The job involves creating investment portfolios for clients by analysing listed companies, building financial models and meeting management teams. He also participates in client pitches and report-back presentations. In addition, Andile contributes to business media platforms such as NewzRoom Afrika and Business Day TV, where he provides live commentary on the business world and economics, as well as companies' financial results. An achievement he is proud of is being named one of the top five in South Africa's Top Stock Pickers by the Daily Investor in 2022. "Being one of the younger names on the list, the recognition was one I was very proud of as it showed that age is irrelevant in a merit-based system," he says. Outside of work he is part of a group of professionals who mentor matrics at St David's Marist Inanda in Johannesburg, giving them knowledge, guiding them and equipping them to contribute positively to society and achieve their career goals.



**Tshego Dichabe**  
Chief executive

**T**shego Dichabe, 33, is the chief executive at Aeon Investment Management, a privately owned investment fund with about R22 billion in assets under management. The group is centred on managing the business, operations and talent management and development while expanding the strategy that helps to position the business to meet the challenges and opportunities within which it operates. While Tshego does not have direct investment management oversight over the client portfolios, she is responsible for the business development and client relations departments. In 2023, she completed the Oxford Leading Strategic Projects Programme at Said Business School at the University of Oxford. Tshego is a selected member participating in the fifth class of the Africa Leadership Initiative, Young Leaders fellowship. In 2023, she received the Mxolisi Mbetse Award for Outstanding Young Professional for her commitment to leadership. In her personal capacity, Tshego is a mentor to aspiring chartered accountants. She looks forward to the fourth industrial revolution, which she believes will help re-imagine the industry with the hope that it will increase in job opportunities and wealth creation.



**Philani Shandu**  
Senior manager and behavioural economist

**P**hilani Shandu, 33, is a senior manager of Standard Bank Group's behavioural economics capability and mastery programme, where he leads a team that uses insights from cognitive and behavioural psychology to understand and optimise the financial behaviours and decisions of the bank's clients. The results unlock a shared sense of value for the bank's clients, shareholders and societies within which it operates. His broader managerial team has built and sustained Africa's largest behavioural economics capability and boasts more than 100 fully-trained behavioural economists operating in 15 countries on the continent, all under Philani's leadership. He has since been nominated for five of the Standard Bank Group's annual Mark of Excellence awards in three years. He is working on the Standard Bank Behavioural Economics Graduate Programme, which aims to develop young people to become behavioural economics practitioners and banking professionals. Overall, his work aims to improve financial literacy and contribute towards the national imperatives of youth development and alleviating the problem of unemployment.



**Arno Jansen van Vuuren**  
Chief operating officer

**A**rno Jansen van Vuuren, 35, is the chief operating officer of Futurewise Education, a black-owned financial services provider that aims to create innovative financial solutions that ensure access to education. His work entails control and oversight of all processes in the company. Arno's forward-thinking mindset is evident in the innovative products that foster financial inclusion and enable people to reach their educational dreams. Futurewise Education focuses on life insurance for education and has a savings plan for future education costs. The company also has a learning hub and has partnered with others in the education sector to build a learning ecosystem for parents and learners. Arno notes that financial inclusion has never been this high on the agenda of the insurance sector but things are changing, particularly with the rise of niche providers and startups. A personal achievement he recalls is that during the Covid-19 lockdown, a period of isolation, he found solace and inspiration when he started an Instagram page for his poetry, which connected him to a community of 5 000 like-minded people. Arno says the fulfilment from this unexpected source inspires him to try new things and keep learning.





# SKIN RENEWAL'S PREJUVENATION REVOLUTION

**Proactively slowing ageing and unlocking radiance: Youthful skin starts early**

In an era in which maintaining a youthful appearance is highly valued, Skin Renewal Aesthetic Clinics have positioned themselves as trailblazers in championing proactive solutions to combat the signs of ageing before they become visible. This emerging global trend, known as prejuvenation, is reshaping the approach to skincare — and Skin Renewal is at the forefront of redefining the possibilities of youthfulness.

Led by the visionary Dr Maureen Allem, founder of Skin Renewal, South Africa's leading medical aesthetic practice has revolutionised the country's medical aesthetics landscape over the past two decades. With more than 18 clinics across Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape, Dr Allem and her team are leading innovation and transformation in the field of aesthetics.

Prejuvenation is a natural extension of the holistic, inside-out approach that sets Skin Renewal apart. "Rather than waiting for signs of ageing to become apparent and then attempting rejuvenation treatment, we advocate for a proactive strategy, offering a range of interventions tailored to each client's individual needs," Dr Allem explains.

This trend is popular among younger individuals, particularly millennials, who are proactive in preserving their skin and addressing signs of ageing before they become prominent. It involves subtle treatments like Botox and minimal fillers to maintain a youthful appearance. Dr Allem says the focus is on preserving the skin — because ageing involves much more than just wrinkles! It also includes the loss of bone, muscle and ligament strength, which contributes to sagging and reveals the effects of gravity.

She says the rise of prejuvenation marks a paradigm shift in the industry's approach, which targets the root causes of ageing and prevents their onset. "By embracing prejuvenation, we're empowering individuals to maximise their natural beauty and wellbeing, and take control of their skin health to achieve lasting results."

In younger clients, hormonal pigmentation — often seen in patients using hormonal contraceptives — are a leading cause of concern, along with skin conditions such as acne, which can severely impact self-esteem and quality of life.

## It's never too early to care for your skin

Even for those with no apparent skin conditions, developing a good skincare regime should not wait until later in life. "Even as babies, sunblock is recommended to prevent damage, so age-appropriate skincare and skincare products should be high on everyone's priority list," she explains. "A significant amount of skin damage occurs before the age of 20, and protecting and preserving the skin early in life can help delay or minimise age-related issues and pigmentation conditions that typically arise between the ages of 28 and 50."

"Starting healthy skincare practices and using age-appropriate skincare products like sunscreen and antioxidants at a young age can help protect existing collagen from daily stressors like pollution and smoking, and minimise damage," she explains, adding that their prejuvenation treatments and services are underpinned by GRASS principles: growth factors, retinols, antioxidants, speciality products and sun protection. "Additionally, we also offer products and supplements to ensure that no treatment or intervention from Skin Renewal is ever just skin deep."

With an unwavering commitment to excellence, Skin Renewal combines cutting-edge technology, scientific research and the expertise of highly skilled medical professionals and therapists to deliver exceptional prejuvenation services. State-of-the-art devices such as lasers, radiofrequency machines, and micro-needling systems offer targeted and effective solutions to combat early signs of ageing. These non-invasive procedures improve skin texture, reduce pigmentation, and enhance overall skin health.

One of the most popular prejuvenation techniques offered by Skin Renewal is the use of innovative anti-ageing injectable treatments such as dermal fillers



and neurotoxins. These treatments help to stimulate collagen production, restore volume, and relax facial muscles, thus preventing the development of fine lines and wrinkles. By starting early, clients can maintain a youthful appearance for longer and reduce the need for more invasive procedures in the future.

## Holistic approach key to vibrance and confidence

The aesthetics industry is not without its critics. Some argue that encouraging individuals to focus on preventing signs of ageing may exacerbate societal pressures to maintain unrealistic standards of beauty. Dr Allem, however, says that Skin Renewal's success lies not only in its technical expertise but in its unwavering dedication to ethical practices, informed decision-making, client satisfaction and psycho-physical wellbeing: "Balancing societal standards and individual empowerment is a complex challenge; we aim to help our patients feel better about themselves but also focus on other aspects of their lives that bring them happiness and fulfilment. It's essential to avoid crossing the line into body dysmorphia and prevent patients from becoming caricatures of themselves."

She says open and honest discussions about expectations and motivations are critical before any procedure is undertaken: "Our approach to rejuvenation is about making small improvements without creating an artificial or exaggerated appearance. We promote natural skin rejuvenation and prioritise the overall harmony and balance of the face, rather than just continuously adding more and more treatments. We also emphasise the importance of lifestyle changes in the ageing process. Our approach is holistic, taking into account lifestyle factors, nutrition and sleep health, alongside aesthetic treatments. Throughout it all, we emphasise the importance of individuality and diversity, and support our clients on their journey to embrace their unique beauty."

By fostering a sense of empowerment and self-confidence, Skin Renewal goes beyond physical transformations and prioritises holistic wellbeing, redefining what it means to age gracefully and authentically in today's day and age.

SKIN **renewal**   
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# BOOSTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRACY

**Good Governance Africa (GGA) is set to tackle the growing disaffection and lack of engagement with democracy across the continent with the launch of its *Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme*.**

The programme aims to **inspire, mobilise and train over a million people in Africa**, particularly youth, to become non-partisan advocates for good governance, both between and within election cycles.

GGA, established in 2014 by Robert Rose, is an independent pan-African non-profit organisation with offices in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, and is in the process of expanding to more countries on the African continent. The organisation focuses on identifying governance deficiencies, providing solutions and promoting good governance. With a vision of an empowered Africa where governments are effective, businesses thrive, and poverty is eradicated, GGA strives to be the leading partner in advancing good governance.

The **Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme** will first be implemented in South Africa before expanding to at least six other African countries. This expansion will address the growing disconnect between highly regarded democratic institutions and youthful citizens who are increasingly disenchanted with democracy.

## **The Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme has five core objectives:**

- Mobilise and empower African citizens, especially young people, to participate and become advocates for good and democratic governance. The goal is to recruit one million young people by 2029.
- Educate and train governance advocates on good governance principles and how good governance can contribute to the improvement of citizens' lives in Africa.
- Increase youth citizen engagement in elections by motivating higher voter registration and turnout rates, as well as civic participation in their national and local governance structures.
- Better inform young citizens about existing accountability mechanisms and encourage the development of additional mechanisms.
- Work with partners to create a training programme, available both online and in-person, tailored to each "young citizen advocate."

## **The Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme aims to achieve these outcomes by:**

- Raising youth citizenship engagement to five times the current levels.
- Create networks among young people participating in the project.
- Engage other organisations that can absorb young people for internships and job opportunities.
- Create opportunities for exchanges with other institutions within the African continent and the world.
- Develop a best practice template for mobilising young people to enhance democratic participation.
- Ensure that 70% of young citizens in targeted regions fully participate in democratic activities.
- Inform policy directions for local election institutions on voter education.
- Influence policy and practice at national and continental levels.
- Partner with like-minded organisations.

**To participate or partner in this programme, speak to us at [info@gga.org](mailto:info@gga.org)**



## **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning**

From the outset, GGA will implement a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning system to measure the impact of the project. This includes assessing changes in citizen engagement during and between elections and providing detailed insights to project funders and partners.

Between elections, we will assess our efforts through pre-intervention and post-intervention representative community surveys. By doing this, we will be able to provide project funders and partners with granular insights into the efficacy of our interventions, and in a manner that best enables the **Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme** to scale up.

## **GGA's expertise**

GGA brings significant expertise to the **Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme**, including:

- Conducting high-quality research to influence policy shifts and solve challenges related to environmental degradation, climate change, under-development, and youth unemployment.
- Using the Governance Performance Index (GPI) to assess local government performance
- Publishing thought leadership articles and facilitating public engagements and dialogues on governance issues.

As GGA prepares to launch the **Young Advocates for Good Governance Programme**, the organisation remains committed to its mission of improving citizens' lives through effective governance and strategic partnerships. This ambitious programme is set to make a lasting impact on the democratic landscape of Africa.







200 Young South Africans 2024

# GOVERNANCE



**Kagiso Mamabolo**  
Economic analyst

**K**agiso Mamabolo, 35, is an economic analyst at the Parliamentary Budget Office of South Africa. Here, she has the responsibility of informing MPs about the economy, state of public finances and the government's performance. Her job requires her to have a deep understanding of the socio-economic elements that underpin the South African economy. She is also required to advise on fiscal framework amendments and policy proposals that will affect the country's coffers. In addition to high-level insights, Kagiso ensures fiscal policies balance financial responsibility with social welfare so the interests of vulnerable people are protected. At its core, her work is a combination of her specialised knowledge and her commitment to social justice to promote policies that foster inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Coming from the private sector and into the public sector, one of her key achievements was facilitating a major investment that created hundreds of jobs. This experience, she says, taught her that it takes refined and special skills and tools to deal with the prevalent social issues including unemployment, inequality and poverty. "I learned to be fearless in negotiations and to always strive for more, primarily when it benefits society," she says.



**Faith Kubeka**  
Chartered accountant

**F**aith Kubeka, 31, is a qualified chartered accountant and works as an auditor assistant manager at the auditor general of South Africa. A major chunk of her adult life has gone into obtaining the status of a chartered accountant which, she says, took her a total of 13 years. In this difficult journey, Faith endured several problems that hindered her progress, including lack of funding, but she was determined to complete her degree. Aside from her daily job, she mentors other aspiring chartered accountants because, she says, fewer people are entering the field and once they're in it, it can become a difficult journey. Faith also offers mentorship to prepare students for the final qualifying South African Institute of Chartered Accountants examination, something she wishes she had been able to have. The lesson she carries with her from her academic journey is that she has the potential to achieve something that she has set her mind to, and she wants other students to believe it, too. Looking ahead, Faith says she would like to see the auditing field be more than just auditing transactions, but to bring more value to people's lives.



**Mahlatse Ramoroka**  
Consultant

**M**ahlatse Ramoroka, 30, kicked off her career at United Nations Women as an intern with the Independent Evaluation Office before working at the Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR). These were the formative experiences that led her to becoming a researcher and international development practitioner today. Having worked in human rights, gender equality and political economics, Mahlatse is driven to use her skills to see a just, equitable and inclusive society, and where minority groups can be part of the decision-making processes that relate to economic equity, inclusivity and non-discrimination. At the CESR, Mahlatse co-authored an article titled Legacies of Apartheid: South African Austerity Perpetuates the Inequalities of Decades Past and she contributed to the fact sheet on South Africa: Austerity in the Midst of Inequality Threatens Human Rights. In her work at United Nations Women in New York she was involved in the coordination and promotion of accountability regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and country levels. Mahlatse is working on another publication to build more literature on women, peace and security.



**Brian Qhaweletu Khumalo**  
Project manager

**L**eadership is about serving others and having a positive effect, says Brian Qhaweletu Khumalo, 34. Being a leader involves, among other things, constantly adapting as things change and embracing challenges. But perhaps most importantly, it's about being able to listen, recognise the strengths of your team and delegate accordingly, so that a collaborative and productive environment is created and maintained. Brian is a project manager in ICT for the City of Ekurhuleni, where each work day he liaises with his team, clients and city officials, designates tasks, monitors progress and reviews achievements. He takes pride in the Fleet Tracking System project, which he says has revolutionised vehicle fleet management through harnessing advanced technology. He believes it is having a transformative effect and is advancing Ekurhuleni towards becoming a smart city. One of his challenges has been managing tight deadlines. He deals with this by breaking down large projects into smaller, more manageable tasks and through clear communication: regular meetings, keeping stakeholders informed of progress and resolving conflicts swiftly. If he could advise his younger self, he would say: "You'd be amazed at what you can achieve one day."



**Nthabiseng S Masinge**  
Senior specialist: communications & stakeholder engagement

**N**thabiseng Masinge, 30, works at the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC). Here she manages the PCC's digital media to communicate the importance of climate change and the just energy transition to South Africans through informative content such as the Just Transition Framework. She recently managed the PCC's Youth Perspectives Series (YPS), which showed the lessons the youth have learned and opinions they have formed from first-hand experience or research on climate change issues. The YPS produced a booklet containing essays written by 15 young climate activists, who are emerging as just transition-shapers and future change-makers. "Being part of the YPS project meant that I was exposed to other young people (mostly black and female) who are passionate about climate change." She is working on the National Climate Action and Just Transition Awareness campaign. It aims to demystify claims and false information about climate change, as well as to educate various strata of society about the real effects of climate change. She says they seek to encourage the public to take action to mitigate the effects of climate change while ensuring resilient structures against its effects are built.



**Busi Sibeko**  
Finance analyst

**A**s a finance analyst in the Parliamentary Budget Office, thirty-year-old Busi Sibeko's work is primarily concerned with explaining what the budget means for the average South African. Her job is to provide independent and objective analysis and advice to parliament on bills presented by the executive, and any other documentation or reports with fiscal implications. Her area of focus is fiscal policy — expenditure and revenue analysis. By analysing real per capita trends in spending, which take into account the needs of the population, population growth and inflation, she shows the budget's real effect on South Africans. In addition, Busi is responsible for revenue analysis — explaining the effect of tax proposals on income and wealth redistribution as well as the broader economy. She is part of parliament's Gender and Women Rights Forum. Busi wants to use her qualifications and experience to boost socio-economic development in South Africa and on the rest of the continent. "We all deserve to live in a just and equitable society," she says. Busi is juggling being a full-time employee and a full-time doctoral student — she is working towards a PhD in applied development economics.



**Saul Musker**  
Director of strategy and delivery support

**P**eople are often surprised to hear how young the project management office team is in the presidency, says Saul Musker, 29, but they have learnt that change in the system is often driven by injecting new ideas and energy into the public service. As the director of strategy and delivery support, his job is to translate President Cyril Ramaphosa's priorities into actionable strategies that produce rapid, concrete results for South Africans, especially in the areas of aiding economic growth, job creation and the country's transition to renewable energy. It's a huge responsibility, but Saul is motivated by knowing that what he does really matters. His team has been able to do what seemed impossible, such as getting the Social Relief of Distress grant to millions in just a few weeks, when Covid struck. He believes that the greatest challenges of his generation are inequality and climate change, but also that young people are the most innovative in South Africa's history. As new technologies disrupt old patterns, governments must be more agile to respond to change, and his hope is that more talented youth enter public service to help address this challenge.



**Jabulisile Shabalala**  
Petitions analyst

**J**abulisile Shabalala, 34, works at the Gauteng legislature as a petitions analyst. Part of her job entails administering the petitions process in the province. The process identifies service delivery gaps, policy issues and socio-economic difficulties. Jabulisile advises members of the provincial legislature's petitions standing committee in executing performance, monitoring and controlling the petitions process. One of Jabulisile's achievements was her involvement in the development of the Gauteng Petitions Regulations of 2016 to enforce and strengthen the provisions of the Gauteng Petitions Act 5 of 2002. The Act was reviewed to evoke punitive measures for non-compliance and strengthen the provisions of cooperative governance in resolving service delivery issues. Jabulisile was the youngest speaker at the 2018 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Colloquium hosted by the department of planning, monitoring and evaluation. Although she already has master's degree, Jabulisile is pursuing one in business administration to complement and diversify her knowledge of building state capacity. She is a board member of Tshiamiso Astronauts, an NGO that seeks to develop children through educational programmes.







200 Young South Africans 2024

# GOVERNANCE



**Dambisa Dube**  
Project manager

Young people are always at the centre of triggering the necessary changes society requires, says Dambisa Dube, 32. She learned this while leading a research project exploring the effects of digitalisation on youth participation in Germany. She says we cannot speak of a South African future without ensuring young people are key actors in shaping it — but fortunately, there is just such a shift happening in the governance sector. Dambisa is a project manager responsible for communication, digitalisation and innovation at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation South Africa. Her biggest challenge there is working with different stakeholders who have varying agendas, mandates and styles of working, but she says this is equipping her with excellent project management skills. She has learned to work in fast-paced environments while juggling the responsibilities of motherhood. In addition to her job, Dambisa leads the Education, Skills and Development subgroup of the Youth Reference Committee on Strengthening Youth Participation in Ending Inequalities of the African Union Youth Envoy. Her wish is to become an innovator who triggers social change, but she already considers herself fortunate to have a job that uses and fulfils all of her strengths and skills.



**Syabonga Sizwe Msweli**  
Political and economic specialist

Syabonga Sizwe Msweli, 30, is a political and economic specialist for the United States Diplomatic Mission in South Africa. He analyses political developments, monitors economic trends and works with government officials to advance US interests. His job involves providing in-depth reports on political issues, promoting trade and investment opportunities, and fostering bilateral cooperation. Syabonga also organises events to enhance understanding between US and South African stakeholders, contributes to crisis management efforts and supports American citizens in the region. Syabonga says that by facilitating dialogue, he aims to strengthen the relationship between the two countries and promote shared goals of democracy, prosperity and security. He is focusing on building ties between the US and KwaZulu-Natal, which involves providing informed counsel to the US government while working at the grassroots level to pinpoint investment prospects for American enterprises, including in smaller local municipalities. Through these efforts, Syabonga says he aims to foster mutually beneficial partnerships, bolster economic growth and promote sustainable development in the province.



**Themba Mathibe**  
Chief operations officer

Themba Mathibe is strongly driven to develop South Africa — so much so that at the age of just 28, he is the chief operations officer of the Johannesburg Social Housing Company (Joshco). He is responsible for many of Joshco's daily operations, oversees more than 500 employees and operationalises the company's strategies and business plans. He also raises funds for building construction and improvement and is involved in securing accommodation for students and the homeless for the City of Johannesburg. The first battle is won by always being positive, and he's accomplished much to back that attitude up. For example, he helped the city to build no less than eight estates in just one year, exactly on the set budget, which created numerous work opportunities — the lion's share of which went to small businesses. Themba says: "It's never too late to change the status quo." He believes that looking ahead and making the necessary changes are responsibilities leaders must bear. Perhaps our politicians can learn from this inspired man, and help him to fulfil his dream of developing our disadvantaged areas and providing all South Africans with public amenities.



**Oudi Kgomongwe**  
Scientific manager

Oudi Kgomongwe, 34, is a scientific manager at the water and sanitation department and is responsible for the coordination and liaison for the national water resources information management at the department. She is required to handle relationships with their current and potential water science stakeholders. Oudi also coordinated and implemented the ninth phase of Unesco's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme. She says her involvement in this key initiative was a recent highlight in her career because it gave her the opportunity to create new systems and processes that the department used to report on its progress, and ensure South Africa practises inclusive and evidence-based water governance and management. This experience taught Oudi about the importance of stakeholder involvement and listening. "The challenges we are facing in the water sector are interconnected and cannot be met if we continue a sectoral-silo approach," she says. As South Africa faces an impending water problem exacerbated by pollution and climate change, Oudi says there will be a demand for water professionals, and this is an opportunity for the youth to understand the intricate relationship of water and everything else around us.



**'Young Africans must put an end to apathy in politics. They should not fear politics, nor should they accept the politics of fear. They need to hold fast to the culture of inquisitiveness, tolerance, accountability and community service with integrity and high ethical standards.'**

– Professor Mehari Taddele Maru, who has experience in teaching, research, intergovernmental negotiations and leadership in multilateral governance bodies, think-tanks, and universities



Photo: Delwyn Verasamy





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200 Young South Africans 2024

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Thendo Gertie Makhado

Junior lecturer

**T**hendo Gertie Makhado, 28, is a junior lecturer at the University of Venda, responsible for clinical practicals. Her primary role is to guide nursing students in bridging the gap between theory and practice by delivering lectures that emphasise the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world clinical settings. Additionally, she accompanies students to clinics and provides hands-on support. Thendo is a role model who fosters their development into competent professional nurses. Her responsibilities extend beyond teaching to include active involvement in community work and research. Her research focuses on critical health issues such as epilepsy and needlestick injury prevention, aiming to enhance healthcare education and reduce the stigma associated with neurological conditions. She strives to improve the quality of nursing education and contribute to the advancement of healthcare in the country. Thendo is working on several initiatives and projects focused on improving healthcare outcomes. These aim to empower and teach parents of children with special needs, promoting inclusivity and helping children with learning disabilities achieve independence. Thendo says her development and success is intertwined with the support and empowerment she provides to others.



## Itumeleng Lets'ola

Community outreach and advocacy

**I**tumeleng Lets'ola, 28, is the community outreach and advocacy manager at the public health advocacy group OurEquity. The group's mission is to achieve the highest standard of physical and mental health. This has been the home of Itumeleng's activism, where she was given the support to advocate for different experts by using her experience in multimedia. Her focus is stakeholder engagement, as well as creating health content for various clients. Educating, working with and equipping young people are the core pillars of her work. For Itumeleng, being part of the collective gives her access to other like-minded collaborators around the world. One challenge she had to deal with was her mental health, but, with help, she learnt to maintain a healthy balance between her personal and professional life. She previously worked as the communications officer at the Soul City Institute for Social Justice. In her current job, she works with various stakeholders on health issues, as well as advancing the organisation's feminist agenda. Looking ahead, Itumeleng envisions the radical feminist movement prospering and that young people are given a seat at the table.



## Biancha Mentoer

Health policy manager

**B**iancha Mentoer, 34, is a manager in health policy at the healthcare group Netcare. Her job is to stay abreast of new developments, synthesise and compile them into accessible content, which informs the group's decision-making. Biancha represents Netcare on two boards of directors. She holds a bachelor of medicine and surgery conferred with distinction in her final clinical examinations. During her master of public health, she specialised in health economics to understand the effect of poorly addressed apartheid-entrenched racial residential segregation on health and healthcare among people in Gauteng. She learnt how spatial planning is statistically relevant to socio-economic privilege and determines how a person interacts with healthcare. Biancha's desire to explore the depths of public health was sparked during her community service year when she faced burnout caused by an under-staffed surgery department which required junior doctors to be on call more frequently than usual and often with less support. Biancha has been elected as the chair of the Hospital Association of South Africa's board sub-committee on research and health policy, which allows her to collaborate with colleagues on legislation and regulation.



## Dimakatso Kanyane

Chief executive

**A**t 31, Dimakatso Kanyane is the chief executive of Dimatrade, which makes Dillets sanitary towels. Her primary role involves establishing and communicating the company's vision and strategy. This involves setting long-term goals and outlining the steps necessary to achieve the goals, as well as ensuring that this vision aligns with the company's values and is communicated effectively. Growing up in Siyabuswa, a rural area in Mpumalanga, she experienced the taboos surrounding menstruation, which contribute to period poverty. This inspired her to create Dillets, with the vision of making menstrual products accessible to women. Dimakatso believes that sanitary towels and menstrual education are a fundamental human right. "Too many girls and women in our country still lack access to these essential resources hindering their ability to fully participate in the society and realise their potential. This is not just a matter of health and hygiene, it's a matter of human rights and dignity," she says. About 10% of the company's monthly revenue is donated to supply young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds with the personal hygiene necessities they require to live their lives confidently.



## Karabo Seema

Registered nurse

**K**arabo Seema, 26, is a registered nurse from Pretoria and works for the Health and Allied Workers Indaba Trade Union. She serves in the organisation at national level as the second deputy president. Karabo is responsible for the union's projects and campaigns, including organising pickets and awareness campaigns related to health. Her work also involves celebrating healthcare workers in the field in different disciplines on their international days of recognition and public holidays, such as planning a Nurses Day celebration. Karabo, who has a diploma in nursing from the SG Lourens Nursing College, says her greatest inspiration comes from her parents, who have always supported her in everything that she does. This inspires Karabo to invest in self-development, such as the six-month in-service Trauma and Emergency Nursing Certificate she recently obtained to enhance the work she does. "With the National Health Insurance bill signed into law, we can envision healthcare that is accessible and equitable to all. Healthcare is a right — everyone should have access to health, regardless of their race and their economic and social standing," Karabo says.



## Anelisa MaDabane Mdyogolo

Peace observer

**P**ease observer Anelisa MaDabane Mdyogolo, 31, is inspired by the work she is doing in Mzomomhle informal settlement on the outskirts of Gonubie in the Eastern Cape. She's part of a project that teaches women and child-headed households how to farm in their own backyards, and how to eat the correct kinds of food. Organic farming is something people can start on a small scale, but it has multiple health benefits, she says. Her work for the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa involves increasing women's participation in decision-making in politics, peace and security, and in conflict management structures and processes, to help create and sustain peace at all levels. In her spare time, Anelisa collects toiletries and "pre-loved" school shoes, which she then donates to the schools she visits when she is doing assessments. The challenges she faces on a daily basis in her work are a shortage funding and not being able to access people in deep rural areas, but she is encouraged by working with humanitarian organisations and people, whose compassion makes her own journey seem that much more doable.



## Mbongiseni Mngomezulu

Social worker

**T**wenty-nine-year-old Mbongiseni Mngomezulu is a social worker at the Mpumalanga department of social development. His work on the victim empowerment programme includes support to people who have been subjected to crime and violence through therapeutic counselling, referring clients to shelters, mediating in family violence and linking victims of gender-based violence with economic empowerment initiatives. Among his many duties is working on the substance-abuse programme educating children, youth, adults and families about its dangers. In addition, he contributes to the reintegration and aftercare programmes that offer support to help people maintain abstinence. Mbongiseni is responsible for the coordination of the Local Drug Action Committee in Standerton, which is compiling an action plan. He would like to be involved in the development of social policy because there "seems to be a need for the establishment, review, amendments and implementation of policy legislative frameworks. Effective social work entails the implementation of research and social and economic policies that promote justice," he says.



## Thapelo Semenya

Digital lead and diabetes advocate

**A**s digital lead for the Parliamentarians for Diabetes Global Network, Thapelo Semenya, 24, manages the charity's online presence, driving engagement and awareness through digital campaigns. She creates and curates content for social media, the website and email newsletters and analyses digital metrics to refine its outreach. She works to empower young people affected by diabetes. This includes organising digital campaigns that highlight their experiences, promoting youth-led initiatives and fostering connections between young advocates and policymakers. A significant challenge she has faced is the lack of awareness of diabetes in her community. To address this, she used her personal story and experiences with the condition to connect with others. By using social media and collaborating with healthcare professionals and influencers, she was able to set up a supportive community, increase awareness and empower people to take control of their diabetes management. What motivates Thapelo to excel is the desire to improve the lives of people with diabetes. "My own journey with diabetes has shown me the importance of support, awareness and advanced technology in managing the condition."







200 Young South Africans 2024

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Juandré Kloppe

Founder, chief executive & co-founder and director

**J**uandré Kloppe, 27, is the chief executive and founder of Cape MedTech and director and co-founder of the non-governmental platform Sponsor Medic. At Cape MedTech, he uses his dual love of medicine and technology to create innovative tools that improve healthcare delivery in under-resourced settings. He develops software that helps nurses, paramedics and doctors make fewer clinical errors. Sponsor Medic raises funds to support government health facilities through sending much-needed staff to places that are underfunded and understaffed, helping patients get better care. One of the projects he has worked on that he is most proud of is Triage Buddy. The software helps to ensure that patients are correctly triaged, which improves the care they get and the workflow of the health facility. The biggest challenge he has faced is leaving his comfort zone of working as a doctor. He sacrificed time and money to build something based on the belief that it would help people. "Only now am I starting to see the benefits of all the sacrifices. I could only endure this with the support of my family and my wife." His advice to his younger self would be: "Believe in your ability to shape the future. Stop waiting for someone else to fix the problems; start building solutions to overcome the challenges."



## Belinah Matshela Maserumule

Transformation employee health and wellness intern

**B**elinah Matshela Maserumule, 28, is a transformation employee health and wellness intern at the department of forestry, fisheries and the environment. She served as a volunteering champion at the University of Johannesburg in community engagement initiatives to help eradicate poverty and discrimination and so improve the lives of the less privileged. Belinah, who holds a BA in psychology and communications, was also a peer educator at the university and assisted students in getting tested for HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, and she taught sexual education. She also received recognition from the University of Johannesburg for her outstanding work. Belinah started the Injabulo Foundation, which aims to assist children in orphanages. She has used her platform as a wellness professional to shape the future of South Africa by helping troubled employees and being involved in special programmes such as Empower a Girl Child and Men in the Making. A challenge she had to deal with was working with people from different backgrounds and cultures, and realised that she needs to familiarise herself with these.



## Siphesihle Delani Hlophe

Nurse educator and PhD candidate

**S**iphesihle Delani Hlophe, 32, is a nurse educator and PhD candidate at the Durban University of Technology. The job involves developing programmes in the nursing services department and implementing orientation, in-service and continuing education programmes. Among his duties are quality assurance in clinical facilitator sessions; conducting educational and training programmes; planning and evaluating new programmes; maintaining instructional materials and coordinating student placement. Siphesihle, who has had several articles published, is concerned about the lack of training on handling gender-based violence (GBV) for nurses and in the healthcare system generally. He says undergraduate qualifications do not adequately prepare students to recognise and respond to GBV and play a constructive role in the clinical field of addressing violence. He is in the process of developing guidelines for the inclusion of comprehensive GBV-management modules in nursing undergraduate curricula. They will include education on collecting and documenting forensic evidence that can be used for trial purposes, teaching survivors of GBV on how to report it to the police and helping them navigate the criminal justice system.



## Taz Emeran-Thomas

Chief operating officer

**T**az Emeran-Thomas, 30, is the chief operating officer at Med-e-Screen, which provides affordable and accessible healthcare to under-resourced communities in the form of a cloud-enabled backpack that screens 10 of the most common diseases and delivers results to the patient within 20 minutes. In addition to that, Med-e-Screen empowers unemployed healthcare workers with the skills and resources needed to be successful entrepreneurs and launch their own practices. Taz, who says she is inspired by God, her 15-year-old son and "the desire to create a better quality of life for the people of South Africa, starting with improving healthcare", is excited by changing the face of healthcare as we know it. "In order to rebuild South Africa and improve the unemployment rate we need to create more entrepreneurs. The people of South Africa deserve affordable, accessible and quality healthcare, so it is up to us to find innovative ways to make this happen," she says. Taz believes that the future of South Africa is in the hands of the youth, who need to be encouraged to be entrepreneurial and given them the support they need. A quote that inspires her is: "God put a Goliath in front of you because He sees a David inside of you."



## Chelsea Anne Hornby

Founder and chief executive

**T**he journey of Chelsea Anne Hornby, 30, began with her struggling with her period. She focused her undergraduate research paper on challenges in women's health, and then undertook a research journey through Africa, in which she survived assault and human trafficking. Determined to change conditions for African women, she decided to invest her life savings into establishing Elle International. Initially the goal was to provide a menstrual cup for women, but after eight years, Elle is now an organisation positioned to advance health equity in sub-Saharan Africa. It will do so through implementing technology that enables datasets for transformative research in women's healthcare, and by providing a range of sustainable health products and services. Chelsea has also translated her traumatic experiences into education programmes that instil coping and resilience mechanisms to help women bounce back from adversity. Among the services Elle provides, or will provide, are: a smart menstrual product dispenser called Moxie; a production line for ecologically friendly sanitary products that will employ hundreds of people when fully scaled; at-home pregnancy test kits that use gold nanoparticles; and digital diagnostic services.



## Charlene Boitumelo Maila

Professional nurse

**G**rowing up in a poor rural community that was "filled with the spirit of generosity and resilience" motivated Charlene Boitumelo Maila, 33, to create a better world; one in which everyone has a chance to thrive, and to have the opportunities she once dreamt of. She leads or works for several groups that uplift women and children, poor people and mentally challenged people, including Africa Girls and Women's Rights, Mental Health SMEs, End GBVF and Afrikan Young Indigenous Leaders. She's a professional nurse, who has worked for many years in government hospitals that lack resources, which meant that she and her team have learnt how to improvise to ensure that patient care is not compromised. Other obstacles that she faces include high patient-to-nurse ratios and bureaucratic hurdles, but she speaks out for her patients so that their needs are heard and met. Charlene says the youth are at the forefront of advocating for human rights, inclusivity and gender equality. She is excited by the future of healthcare, because empowerment initiatives use technology and social media to create empowered and informed individuals, and believes mental health services will become as accessible as those for physical healthcare.



## Vukosi Mashele

Life coach and neuro-linguistic programming practitioner

**V**ukosi Mashele has an ambitious plan: to become Africa's number one mental health practitioner. He's a life coach and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) practitioner, leading I Matter Consulting, but he's also expanding his brand as a coach in Eswatini and Ghana and provides "psycho-education" on Munghana Lonene FM in South Africa and EBIS 2 FM in Eswatini. As an NLP practitioner, Vukosi, 30, guides his clients to understand conscious and unconscious behaviours that are not useful and find ways to overcome them. Because he is not a qualified psychologist, he has encountered doubt from potential clients, but he says that once they have experienced his services, they soon change their minds. He says all practitioners, from psychologists to counsellors and psychiatrists, can work together and benefit from creating a referral system for each others' specialised services. He sees a future where life coaching and NLP practices are recognised by regulatory councils and medical aid schemes, and are offered as courses by universities. But research needs to be done to make techniques used in NLP and life coaching more culturally relevant for African people.



## Bokang Jackson Morure

Cluster manager

**M**en's health is something that needs to be prioritised in South Africa's healthcare system. This is because many men neglect going for routine check-ups and learning about preventive care, because of stigmas about seeking help. To address this, Bokang Jackson Morure, 32, is creating safe spaces for men, where they can have open discussions and attend workshops to learn about health issues. Bokang is a cluster manager at Wits Health Consortium, where he supports many key department of health priority programmes, using data, programme indicators and operations research to continuously enhance outputs. Through his work at Wits he implemented the Men's Health Project, which has gained much recognition and won him awards. His big takeaways from this project were working with people to understand their needs, being flexible to adapt working models and conducting regular follow-ups to ensure long-term behavioural changes in participants. He says the youth are at the forefront of technological advancements, which are causing a radical transformation in healthcare. For example, telemedicine and mobile health apps will expand access to healthcare to people in underserved areas.





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## 200 Young South Africans 2024

# LEGAL SERVICES

**Ziyanda Sibeko**  
Partner at Webber Wentzel

**Z**iyanda Sibeko, 30, is a partner in the dispute resolution department at Webber Wentzel. He has a diverse general commercial litigation practice and experience often involving highly regulated industries such as mining, petroleum, gas, and oil industries including medical schemes industries, insurance, financial services, construction and public procurement. His work extends to commercial arbitrations, environmental law, forensic investigations, public and administrative law and general contracts disputes. Ziyanda has experience in high court, supreme court of appeal and constitutional court litigation. He says his biggest achievement is becoming a partner at Webber Wentzel and takes pride in working alongside the best legal brains and talent in the country. He is also proud of having trained about 20 candidate attorneys, most of whom have been retained as junior associates and some who have gone on to achieve greater things abroad. He says his family and the people he meets at and through his work have inspired him to excel. Ziyanda does pro bono work in Daveyton, where he lives, and for organisations such as the South African Aids Council and trust. He is also involved in outreach programmes through his church.



**Danica Jonker**  
Candidate attorney

**D**anica Jonker, 25, is a candidate attorney at Webber Wentzel. She is completing her practical vocational training as part of the process of becoming an admitted attorney of the high court. Her daily duties involve drafting legal documents and correspondence; attending court; meeting clients; training and doing legal research. In addition, Danica is the secretary general of the Webber Wentzel Leadership Network, an organisation that aims to inspire and educate future leaders. While at university, she was on the student community service committee, helping to rebuild a small primary school in Ikageng, a township in Potchefstroom. "It opened my eyes to the problems that South Africa is still facing, and will continue to face, if we do not all start to make a change," she says. The fact that she is making a difference motivates her to continue. One of the biggest challenges she has faced was being unable to pay for her studies at the end of her first degree. To overcome this, Danica started her own business, selling study notes and tutoring students, and working as a marker and tutor. "This was a time where my dreams seemed to be out of reach, but when I looked back, I realised I had learned many valuable skills from such a hard time," she says.



**Elmariese Vermeulen**  
Director, attorney and notary

**E**lmariese Vermeulen, 30, is the founder and director of Opreq, a legal advising app tailored for South Africans. As an admitted attorney and notary of the high court, Elmariese wanted to make legal advice affordable and accessible to more people. Opreq provides users with reliable legal guidance, education and free resources on critical legal issues. Elmariese oversees the app's development and manages the company's social media presence, ensuring it remains connected to its audience through informative content. Her job involves providing legal advice to the company's corporate clients, as well as product development and marketing. Elmariese says that starting the Opreq app with no experience in coding has been one of her most significant achievements. The process taught her the importance of stepping outside of her comfort zone, a lesson that she says extends beyond personal growth into her professional development. Elmariese says Opreq is inspired by a desire to provide accessible legal knowledge to empower people and companies, particularly those for whom legal services are costly, with the information they need to navigate their legal rights. Her latest venture at Opreq is a course that can be downloaded for candidate legal practitioners.



**Lemont Shondlani**  
Candidate attorney

**L**emont Shondlani, 22, is a candidate attorney at the international law firm DLA Piper. His practice areas encompass telecommunications, media, technology and broad-based black economic empowerment. Lemont's work involves ensuring companies comply with South African laws and regulations. To achieve this, his daily tasks include drafting legal documents for ongoing procedures, reviewing agreements and conducting legal research to provide informed advice. Lemont's work extends to assisting both domestic and international matters. He is also involved in corporate transactions that intersect with his practice areas, which involves drafting legal documents and conducting due diligence on companies. Lemont, who gained his Bachelor of Laws in 2023, says he was motivated to achieve academically by the realisation that many young people cannot, for various reasons, attend higher education institutions. He says his accomplishments have reinforced his belief in the power of hard work, resilience and passion. Lemont adds that the achievements of his role model, advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi SC, who has written a number of books and has been involved in landmark cases such as representing South Africa in the Israel genocide case at the International Court of Justice, have also motivated him to push for success in the legal profession.



**'A society must seek to ensure that the basic necessities of life are accessible to all if it is to be a society in which human dignity, freedom and equality are foundational.'**

Justice Yvonne Mokgoro, a judge of the constitutional court



Photo: Delwyn Verasamy





# 200 Young South Africans 2024 LEGAL SERVICES

## Abongile Nkamisa Attorney

**A**bongile Nkamisa, 28, works with a team of lawyers at Open Secrets, collaborating closely with the investigations and campaigns teams to support investigations and advocacy. The aim is to hold corporations, individuals and state institutions accountable for economic crimes. By developing robust legal strategies, accountability is built and contributes to litigation efforts. This integrated approach ensures that litigation efforts are well-informed and effectively targeted, enhancing the fight against economic crime to make a meaningful difference in promoting justice and transparency. One of Abongile's achievements she is most proud of is being selected by Women in Law South Africa as the winner of the Student Change Maker Award in 2019 in recognition for her contributions to Walter Sisulu University and for her support to rural schools in Eastern Cape. Another highlight of her career was clerking at the constitutional court for Justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga. Other achievements include being editorial assistant for *South African Constitutional Law* and serving her articles at the social justice law organisation, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies. Abongile says her journey has taught her that the essence of meaningful work is its effect on the lives of others.



## Sanele Mntambo Public prosecutor

**S**anele Mntambo, 26, lives in Madadeni, Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal and is a district court prosecutor at the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa. His job entails reading dockets and deciding whether to conduct prosecution or not, and representing victims of crime in court. Sanele received his bachelor of laws from the University of Johannesburg. An achievement he is particularly proud of is receiving an award for being the top-performing prosecutor in the district court in Madadeni. From this Sanele says he learnt that a prosecutor must prosecute every case without any fear, favour or prejudice and that as a prosecutor he must ensure that the victims of crime get justice. One of the challenges Sanele has faced is being accused of corruption by an attorney after he opposed his request for bail. He says he overcame this by ignoring the attorney and ensuring that everything he does is in the interest of justice. The advice he would give to his younger self is that you must never give up; you must always be obsessed with success. Sanele says what excites and drives him to succeed is that his work will enhance access to justice for all people, in particular poor people.



## Thembisile Mahuwa Lawyer

**T**hembisile Mahuwa works for the Unisa Law Clinic and provides free quality legal services to indigent people, ensuring access to justice and legal representation for all. The 29-year-old also runs free legal education workshops for students, entrepreneurs and the community. When Thembisile was doing her articles at the law clinic she was part of a group that started three legal clinics in three provinces. She says her greatest achievement is that she has won all her cases that she has undertaken in the past two years. Thembisile says she was inspired to make a difference when she was volunteering with the Youth Crime Prevention Desk in Vosloorus while she was studying towards her law degree, when she realised that people did not know the law and that it was there to protect them. Thembisile, who started doing voluntary work at the age of 15, now runs free legal workshops for NGOs and members of the community. Her role model is Frene Ginwala, the first speaker of the National Assembly after apartheid, because she used her education to advance human rights.



## Ashley Zwelihle Seckel Attorney

**A**shley Seckel, 31, is a corporate and commercial attorney at Smit Sewgoolam Incorporated. His drive to provide legal services and counselling to vulnerable people was born out of his legal practice training at the University of Johannesburg's Doornfontein Law Clinic. The facility provides legal assistance to indigent people in society. He worked overtime at the Law Clinic and had the time to interact with clients from different backgrounds and connect with them on a personal level. His successful legal cases gave them cause to celebrate with tears of joy. It fulfilled him and proved that this is what he was meant to be doing. Ashley was awarded a national Pro Bono Award for his efforts, but he says, the award does not compare to the feeling he got when he saw the impact he had on the indigent families. "This experience inspired me to become the practitioner that I am becoming," he says. His family's circumstances motivate him to keep going, because he says his work is her only chance to improve their lives, and that of the community and the country as a whole. His work has shown him the true meaning of ubuntu.



## Emogine Bohitile Candidate legal practitioner (awaiting admission)

**E**mogine Bohitile, 26, is a candidate legal practitioner at ENSafrica, the biggest law firm in Africa, and is responsible for legal drafting, research, trust registrations and estate administration. She is also a member of the South African Institute of Intellectual Property Law (SAIIPL) and is completing her Group 1 SAIPL examinations to certify her specialisation in intellectual property law. Emogine was a recipient of the Golden Key International Honour Society medal for being in the top 15% in the master of laws in intellectual property law in her year. The medal gives her access to people with similar ambitions as hers, which include being a thought leader in technology and intellectual property law. She is curious about how technology, especially data and new innovations like AI are changing the dynamics in the world. "The challenge of navigating complex legal landscapes and safeguarding innovation inspires me. Knowing that my efforts protect creators' rights and promote fair use of technology keeps me striving for excellence," she says. Emogine is currently preparing for her SAIPL examinations.



## Nathan-Ross Adams Founder and managing director

**N**athan-Ross Adams, 30, is the founder and managing director of ITLawCo. The best way to describe what he does is to use his own words: "I help the world's most innovative organisations to safely, lawfully and profitably leverage frontier technologies, such as artificial intelligence." Nathan-Ross is developing an artificial intelligence safety programme to train African leaders on the intersection of AI safety, grand strategy and geopolitics. The programme aims to equip leaders with the skills to navigate the complexities of AI while ensuring its safe use. The programme has provided input to the African Union's draft AI white paper and South Africa's national AI strategy. One of Nathan-Ross's most challenging jobs was working on a multinational company's data privacy programme and having to understand the complex regulations in the Middle East and Africa. By building solid relationships with stakeholders and regulatory bodies, his team overcame these difficulties. He says the advancements in AI, cybersecurity and data privacy will reshape industries, economies and how we live and work.



# FARM TO FASHION

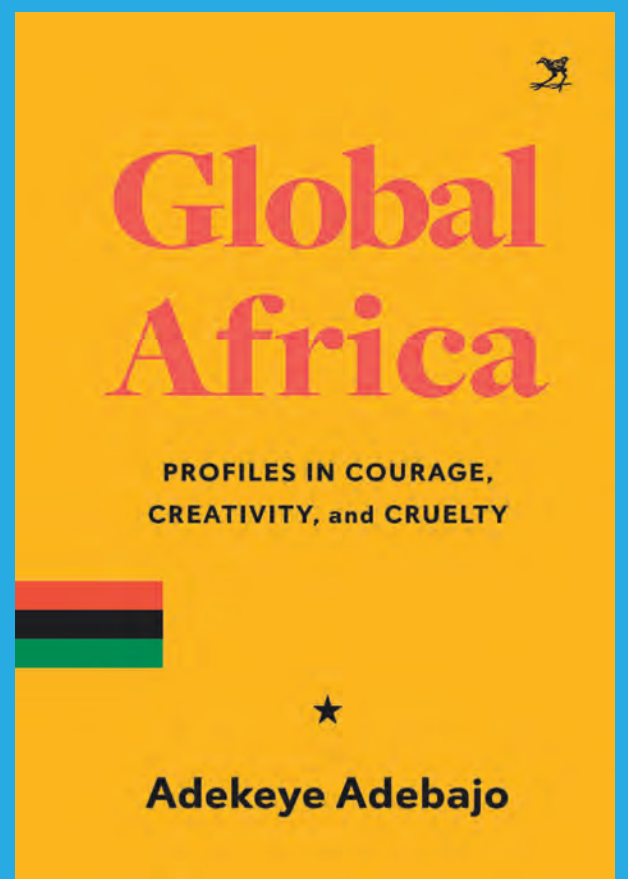
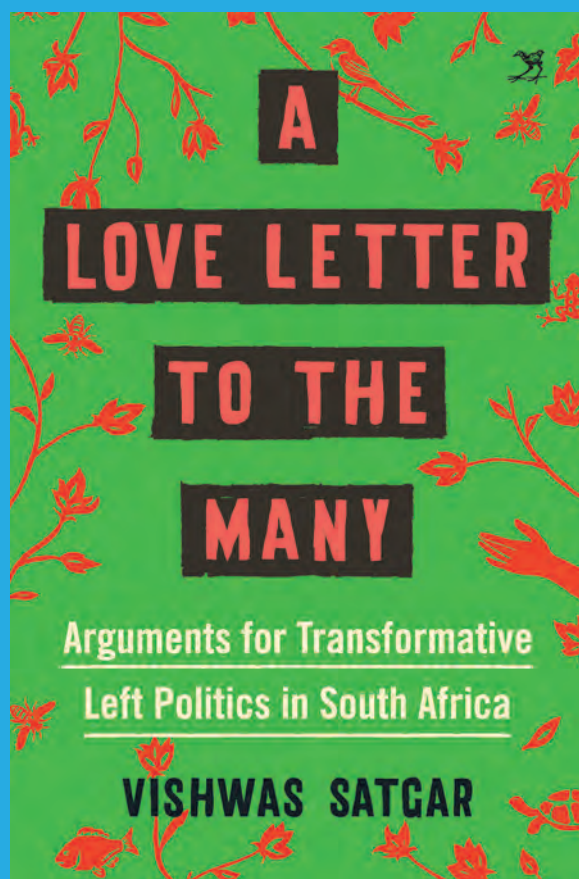
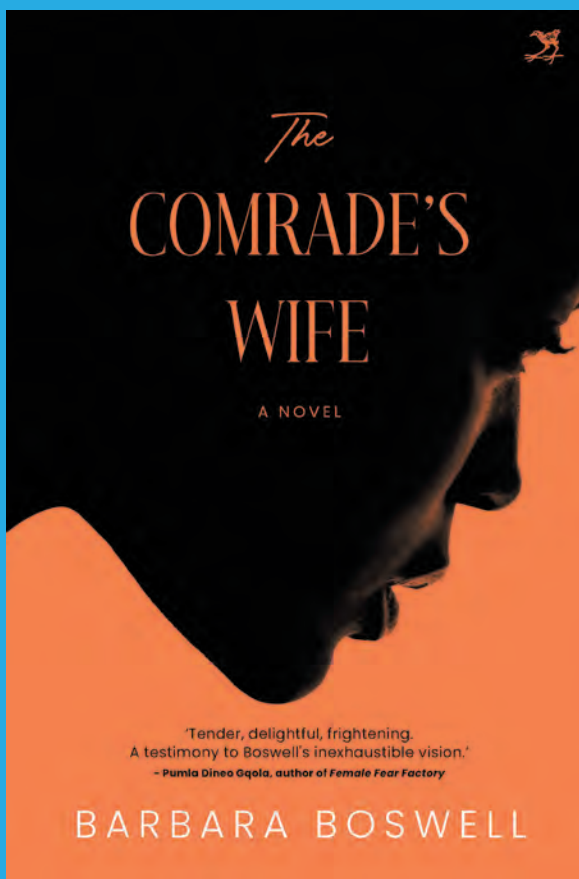
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Cindy Mkwazazi  
Managing director

Cindy Mkwazazi, 29, was inspired by Theo Baloyi, who started his company Bathu Shoes by selling shoes from the trunk of his car. In a similar fashion, she started Crystal Nature by manufacturing all the products at her father's house. She began on her own and now employs five full-time staff members. But she says that flying solo was not the way the award-winning company found its feet; building a successful company definitely requires a team effort. She ensures that her team members always feel valued and motivated, in a supportive workplace culture. Cindy had a BSc and used her scientific knowledge to begin manufacturing Crystal Nature's detergents, but she had no idea how to make her home business competitive alongside international brands. To this end, she entered into the FB YSA accelerator programme, then the SME Toolkit Business Plan Competition. She won awards in both, and they equipped her with the knowledge she needed to expand her business. Passing on her skills and knowledge is important to Cindy and her team. They are involved in several township empowerment projects: employing and training the youth; encouraging women to start their own businesses; and conducting workshops that equip people with basic entrepreneurship skills.



Zanele Nkomo  
Head of operations

Zanele Nkomo, 35, grew up with a single mother in the townships. Her mother, who continued to learn throughout her life and obtained a degree in her 50s, was a positive role model who instilled a strong work ethic in Zanele. She learned from her mother empathy and understanding, but also the importance of enabling and nurturing others, qualities that have served her well as a leader. Zanele is the orchestrator of Essential Health's supply chain, where she fosters excellence across the end-to-end supply chain, among many other responsibilities. Her top achievement was ensuring that a number of employees did not lose their jobs during the pandemic, and finding alternatives for those who were retrenched. Her sector actually improved production volumes and achieved record-breaking results. She learned a number of lessons from this experience, including realising how resilient she is and how powerful collaborations between the private sector, employees and communities can be. As a young black woman she says she had to work harder than her colleagues to be treated equally as a mechanical engineer. She's not afraid to speak up against injustices that affect her or those whom she leads.



Nomathemba Magagula  
Operations manager

Empowering Africans by building infrastructure for better transport, food and water solutions is what inspires Nomathemba Magagula, 31. She's the operations manager of Barloworld Equipment's KwaZulu-Natal branch, which supplies construction and mining equipment. The dealership is responsible for maintaining the machinery it sells, and she's learnt that transparency and pursuing mutual goals with communities helps their clients deliver faster services — which improves infrastructure faster. Like many women, she was underpaid in previous jobs, a situation that she remedied by changing companies and exploring different supply chains in her industry. She's inspired by her grandfather, who built centres for disabled people in Mpumalanga. He always asked, "If not you, then who?" — a motto that helps her focus. There are probably not that many construction industry workers who also publish poetry books. Nomathemba has self-published a collection called *A Nguni Scribe*, which examines the origins, contributions and healings of Africans. She's also building an online platform for creatives, which enables a better flow of African products across the African diaspora.



Dimakatso Kesentswe Makgati  
Technology transfer and knowledge facilitator

Dimakatso Kesentswe Makgati, 31, is a technology transfer and knowledge facilitator at the Mine Health and Safety Council, where she promotes occupational health and safety in the mining industry. Like many women in this traditionally male-dominated sector, she faced difficulties when she started, such as finding the right-sized personal protective equipment, but she says that there are now policies in place that ensure that such problems are a thing of the past. Dimakatso believes in uplifting others, so much so that as soon as she got to university, she started teaching science, technology, engineering and maths to high school students. She did this because she was told by a teacher that "if you want to remember something forever, teach it". Dimakatso's proud that five of the learners she tutored got into tertiary education institutions and completed their courses. She's now working with others to re-establish an organisation that provides tutoring for learners in the school holidays. She says the mining industry is becoming increasingly driven by technology. Embracing this technology makes mining accessible to all, regardless of gender or ability. But she says we need to upskill the youth first, so they can obtain employment in the sector.



Esrom Sekhu  
Commercial analyst and entrepreneur

Esrom Sekhu, 28, has two interests that have little to do with each other. He is a commercial analyst at Anglo American and he wants to become a livestock farmer. Esrom has more than five years of experience across business consulting management, supply chain and civil engineering in the transportation, logistics and mining sectors. His responsibilities include data analytics and reporting, strategy formulation, continuous improvement, cost reduction, compliance assurance and stakeholder engagement. Committed to safety and quality, he transforms data into actionable business insights and ensures timely project delivery. As an entrepreneur, Esrom has employed people and says he has ambitions to create more jobs, particularly for the youth. He says one of his most notable achievements was employing a person who had been jobless for two years. Seeing how this changed the man's life has inspired him to expand this venture. His biggest challenge as a small business owner is attracting clients. He battled to gain clients' trust when large companies had more influence, experience and resources. Esrom tackles this by being persistent, building strong relationships and delivering a good service.



Mohammed Razaa Sabi  
Professional civil and tailings engineer

As a specialised professional civil and tailings engineer, Mohammed Razaa Sabi, 35, is responsible for the design, construction, management and monitoring of tailings storage facilities. Tailings, the by-products of mining operations, consist of soil, ground rock and process effluents left over after mineral extraction. Managing these materials safely is critical to preventing environmental contamination and ensuring the stability of storage facilities. His work also involves recycling water to reduce pollution during mining. Mohammed oversees construction, conducts inspections and implements monitoring systems to ensure safety and compliance with environmental regulations. Additionally, he performs risk assessments, develops mitigation strategies and prepares emergency response plans. It is essential that he stays updated with advancements in tailings management technology so that safety and efficiency is improved. Mohammed is proud of his role in enforcing environmental and water quality preservation measures. Among other things, he is designing two double compartment dams so that the water can be reused at the mine instead of having fresh or municipal water polluted and lost to the mining process.



Bevan Mongwe  
Graduate electrical engineer

Bevan Mongwe, 25, is a graduate electrical engineer who works for Anglo American Platinum. His practical training involves learning how to use engineering equipment in mines and process plants and shadowing and assisting engineers on site. Bevan obtained seven distinctions in matric, but had little idea about which career to pursue. This is one of the reasons that he founded the Ezmazwe Innovation Science and Technology Expo, so that young villagers in Tzaneen can make informed decisions about career choices. The initiative also develops skills, because learners participate in practical projects that they present on expo day. Bevan is also the co-founder of the Valhuri Community Development Organisation, which teaches learners about the importance of maths and science. South Africa is rich in natural resources, particularly its abundant sunlight, and Bevan says that engineers are exploring new and environmentally friendly ways to harness these resources, such as developing more efficient solar panels. He believes that the future of engineering is bright in our country, and has myriad employment opportunities for the youth.



Luyanda Mthethwa  
Sustainability and climate change manager

Luyanda Mthethwa, 28, develops and implements strategies for organisations that minimise their environmental impact and their ability to adapt to climate change. She's excited that there is a growing expectation for companies to be more transparent about their practices, and that consumers and regulatory bodies are increasingly holding them more accountable. She used to work for a mining company, where she learned many valuable lessons before she left and joined PwC. The job involved a lot of travel and long hours, and Luyanda realised she had to live a healthier life to cope with her work commitments. Because the mining industry is traditionally male-dominated, she struggled initially with feelings of incompetence. To thrive in the workplace, she had to be true to herself, and show up as her full self. She threw herself into a project that created 3 000 pairs of school shoes from worn-out mining gumboots, which not only saved the mining company money but also benefited people and the environment. The project, which is still going, involved several partnerships, which taught Luyanda that collaboration produces the best long-term results — and that one man's waste can become another's treasure.







Refiloe Jane

Professional football player

Refiloe Jane, 31, is a professional football player who captains the national team, Banyana Banyana. She also plays for the Sassuolo Football Club in Italy. Refiloe was the first player to play for a top team in the Italian Series 1 League and the only South African player to play for AC Milan. She has represented South Africa at the Olympics, the Fifa World Cup and other big tournaments. Refiloe says one of her achievements she is most proud of is winning the Women's Africa Cup of Nations under her captaincy. The other highlights in her life include being nominated for the SA Sports Star Awards and getting recognition from President Cyril Ramaphosa. The footballer is also the founder of the Refiloe Jane Outreach and the Refiloe Jane Foundation, which are organisations that are aimed at giving back to less advantaged people and to promote football development at grassroots levels. The organisations donate shoes, food, school resources and sports kits to primary schools. She told the Italian organisation Gariwo: "I saw how young people in my community didn't get opportunities to grow. Many things seemed far-fetched for them. So I realised we could try to bring these opportunities closer to them, giving them the hope they needed."



Hildah Tholakele Magaia

Athlete

Hildah Tholakele Magaia, 29, now resides in Mexico, where she plays for the professional women's team Mazatlan Feminil Football Club. She says it's lonely being so far from home, and she misses her friends and family, but as a deeply religious person she reminds herself that this is the path God chose for her — and it's helping to support her mother. She's had several mentors on her way to becoming a pro football player, a job she describes as "refreshing to the mind, body and soul". Among her heroes are Banyana Banyana stars Portia Modise and Refiloe Jane, and sports administrator and coach Christa Kgampe. She's also inspired by her teammates, who continually push her to do and give of her best — and perhaps, she says, because she can also be an inspiration for a youngster somewhere. She looks back with pride at being part of the team that won the Women's Africa Cup of Nations tournament in 2022, and for making it into the qualifying round of Women's Fifa World Cup for the first time. Football is growing fast in developmental areas, and so is women's football, both of which Hilda says makes her feel inspired.



Koketso Kgogome

Content producer and basketball analyst

Koketso Kgogome, 28, began her career by studying law, but soon realised it was not for her. She made a vow that her next career would be enjoyable, and sure enough, it's all about basketball. During Covid she and her friends launched The Fastbreak Podcast that featured exclusive interviews with renowned basketball players, which caught the attention of her present employers. These days she produces content for 22Ours, is a lifestyle and basketball contributor for *Nounouche* magazine and is a basketball analyst on *The Morning Show* for eTV and 5FM. Through these various jobs she explores and analyses the sport and the culture that surrounds it, and shares her expertise with audiences. Koketso is also involved in covering events such as the The Basketball Africa League playoffs and the Afrogames, and she's helping to produce *The Quantum Football Show* for Showmax. Koketso is excited about how new technologies are changing the way audiences watch and enjoy basketball — Showmax recently aired the Premier League on mobile devices, and digital platforms are providing more avenues for fans to interact on.



Dumisani Mthethwa

Software engineer

Dumisani Mthethwa, 32, is a software engineer at Standard Bank responsible for systems integration. He also runs the TOPTD Annual Sports Tournament, which he founded 10 years ago. This initiative, hosted in deep rural KwaZulu-Natal, is themed "Rural Communities Anticipating 4IR", and is aimed at promoting technology and data science. Dumisani organises the tournament, fundraises and provides participants with laptops loaded with Python, SQL and HTML programming languages, along with tutorials from beginner to expert levels. But TOPTD is more than just a sporting event. Dumisani's goal is to inspire and upskill young people, offering them a pathway out of poverty. In addition to the sports tournament, the TOPTD Queen Check Annual Chess Tournament for girls is held every year on 9 August. This event also campaigns against gender-based violence. This year's event included for the first time the Python certification, a precursor to a larger project being developed: a community-based coding workshop series aimed at teaching young people programming and data science skills. Dumisani says this initiative seeks to provide ongoing education and mentorship to foster a new generation of tech-savvy youth in his community.



Nomvula Kgoale

Football player

Nomvula Kgoale, 28, set out to see how she can challenge the naysayers in her community. When they told her that she could not achieve certain things, she turned their negative comments around by doing what they said was impossible. She plays for TS Galaxy Football Club in whatever position the team requires her to on the day. She says she wasn't an exceptionally talented player to begin with, and had to rely on hard work and self-motivation to get to where she is today. She assists with the Nomvula Kgoale Development Programme, which aims through sport to improve the lives of schoolchildren, especially in rural areas. Nomvula helps to supply training tools to those who are in need such as match kits, soccer balls and soccer boots. She says that obtaining funding has not been easy, but she works hard at her own game and being present at events as an influential sports person. Women's sports are evolving and changing on a regular basis around the world, and this excites the young soccer star. She's motivated by what she can yet achieve and become, and believes that whatever she learns, she will pass on to those who need it most.



Kaylin Swart

Footballer

Twenty-nine-year-old Kaylin Swart is the goalkeeper for the South African Football Association Women's League club JvW and the South Africa women's national team. She says her biggest achievement to date is winning the 2023 Goalkeeper of the Year award in the Hollywoodbets Super League, South Africa's premier women's football league. She says: "2023 was a great year for me and I learnt that never giving up, and working towards a goal, requires so much focus and determination — and that no one can take away from you." Kaylin is proud of being part of the education department's back-to-school campaigns, which aim to help youths stay in school because education is the stepping stone to a brighter future. Asked about challenges she has faced in her career, she replied: "Mental health has always been something I've struggled with and the pressures of being in the national team are massive." She has overcome this by seeking help and focusing on the things she can control. She is motivated by being a positive influence for the younger generation of athletes and excited about the growth of women's football in South Africa, "And, if I can be a small part of it, I'll be happy," she says.



Mandla Mbotho

Law student

Mandla Mbotho, 27, has put his belief that the youth must become involved in their communities for meaningful change to occur into concrete action. Through his work with the nonprofit Sport Is Life Movement, Mandla is motivating the youth through hockey at a number of primary schools in townships and rural areas, where he nurtures talent to "level the playing field in South African sports". As his hero Nelson Mandela pointed out, sport is a great unifier, and for the learners it's a chance for them to access opportunities they did not have before. He relates how Sport Is Life Movement managed to develop a provincial hockey player from Keagile Primary School in Potchefstroom within just three months of starting their programme there. This demonstrated to him that much can be achieved with limited resources. Mandla is studying law at Unisa and was recently elected to the student representative council. He is also the hockey manager for the boys U13 provincial hockey team in North West. He believes that patience is key to overcoming the lack of resources that inhibits many young South Africans from furthering their education.



**'The most important thing is that you never listen to someone who tells you, you can't make it, you are not going to make it. It's up to you and you alone. I want to tell the kids to keep on dreaming and believing.'**

Springbok captain Siya Kolisi



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Nafeesa Alibedi  
Founder and chief executive

Nafeesa Alibedi, 32, is the founder and chief executive of Creative Tech Solutions. Her job involves leading the development and implementation of innovative educational technologies. She oversees the creation of artificial intelligence-driven platforms that provide personalised learning experiences in coding, robotics and data science, particularly for underserved communities. Nafeesa also focuses on empowering women and minorities in technology by promoting diversity and inclusion through targeted initiatives. Additionally, as the organiser lead for Google Developer Groups (GDG), she fosters a collaborative environment for knowledge sharing and networking, essential for driving entrepreneurship and innovation. One of her proudest achievements has been establishing and leading the GDG chapter in Ladysmith, a small town where opportunities in the tech industry are minimal. Through this experience she realised that even in small towns, there is potential waiting to be unlocked and effective communication and hands-on learning experiences are crucial in making technology accessible and exciting. A challenge was learning to balance multiple roles, such as founding Creative Tech Solutions and leading the GDG chapter, which required time management and delegation.



Thabo Matue  
Principal software engineer

Thabo Matue, 30, believes that the field he works in — he's a software engineer at Statistics South Africa — will in the future be almost fully run by artificial intelligence. This is a good thing in his opinion, as AI is already playing more and more of a crucial role, not only in data analysis but in healthcare, education and a number of other sectors, and the ethical implications of its use are gaining widespread attention, to ensure it is used responsibly. Nelson Mandela strongly motivated him to make a difference in this world, and he says that his proudest achievement, which was making it into Geekulcha's Top 15 Young Geeks, taught him that selfless service to others will eventually lead to you getting rewarded by the universe. Consistent effort is an investment in yourself, and will lead to recognition and fulfilment; our acts of kindness and dedication someday create positive ripple effects. He's studying towards an MA in computer science at the University of the Free State, and says that part of his daily work is to ensure that he stays up to date with the latest industry trends and technologies in his field, and train junior software engineers in their application.



Tumisi Beiri Jeremiah Molelekoa  
Lecturer and researcher

Tumisi Beiri Jeremiah Molelekoa, 32, is a food science and technology lecturer and researcher at the University of Johannesburg. He lectures modules such as food biochemistry, food technology, food analysis and instrumentation, and research methodology. Having completed a PhD in the chemistry and fermentation of microbial metabolites, his research involves the use of micro-organisms to sustainably produce value-added products with potential application in various industries such as food, agriculture, pharmaceutical, cosmetics and textiles. He is also a co-director at the Centre for Innovative Food Research (CIFR). Tumisi is involved in various administrative and supervisory roles that include module coordination and the supervision of MSc and PhD students. Furthermore, at the faculty of science he serves as a transformation committee member. He is peer-reviewed in science journals, is an advisory board member for the department of biotechnology and food technology at Tshwane University of Technology, an organising member for the Northern Branch South African Association of Food Science and Technology, and the Brics YEA Young Expert for 2024 tasked to develop the energy outlook for Brics countries.



Sinazo Nqeketo  
Postdoctoral research fellow

Sinazo Nqeketo, 27, a postdoctoral research fellow at Nelson Mandela University, has developed sustainable methods to make two breakthrough drugs in the war against HIV. One is called Dolutegravir, which is recommended by the World Health Organisation as a first-line treatment of HIV initiating antiretroviral therapy globally, and the other is Cabotegravir, the first HIV prevention injection approved in South Africa in 2022. She feels that her work has contributed to the African Union's goal of Africa manufacturing 60% of its own vaccines by 2040. In her work Sinazo makes use of a new technology called continuous flow technology, which uses better methods for making chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and her role at the university is to devise ways of doing so in a cost-effective and green manner. She's learnt that her work in the laboratory is often slow and time-consuming, and has developed the patience and resilience that it demands. Using flow chemistry for conducting research and for production is a new field in South Africa, and Sinazo is excited about the job and skills opportunities it potentially offers.



Sange Maxaku  
Co-founder and chief product officer

Twenty-seven-year-old Sange Maxaku is the co-founder and chief product officer at Bothale AI. The BSc electrical and computer engineering graduate heads up product development, focusing on creating solutions that seamlessly integrate African languages. This involves researching user needs, designing user-friendly interfaces, developing code and overseeing the implementation of the company's language-inclusive product suite. A project that he is particularly proud of is working on a no-code chatbot-building platform that enables businesses to easily create and deploy chatbots in South African languages, across various social media channels, without needing coding skills. He is excited about leading a project to overhaul Bothale AI's chatbots. "We'll be integrating powerful large language models to enable more natural and engaging conversations," Sange says. Two things that inspire him are bridging the digital divide caused by language barriers in Africa and the potential for AI to drive positive change. If he could give his younger self advice, it would be to keep learning and not be afraid to experiment.



Fanelesibonge Mbuyazi  
Software engineer

Fanelesibonge Mbuyazi, 26, is a software engineer at MultiChoice. Her job encompasses coding and leveraging artificial intelligence for business optimisation. Fanelesibonge spearheads the corporate social investment (CSI) projects for DSTV Media Sales. Last year, she successfully executed one CSI initiative and is currently overseeing the planning and execution of four more initiatives. In 2022, she became a Black Women in Science Fellow. In 2023, she represented South Africa at the Brics Future Skills for Mobile App Development competition. In 2022, with her experience as a software engineer, she made a VR film and AR app for the Fakugesi African Digital & Innovation Festival. Fanelesibonge is the founder of a start-up called Seen, which addresses challenges for photographers and videographers, streamlining client connections, project management and financial security. The start-up's mission, sponsored by Telkom, JP Morgan and the Embassy of Ireland, is to empower creatives, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. She believes that by empowering young people with education, opportunities and resources, we can harness their potential to build a more inclusive, prosperous and equitable future for all South Africans.



Lihle Nkomo  
Senior manager

Lihle Nkomo, 29, is a senior manager of eCommerce intelligence and digital transformation at Massmart. Her job encompasses developing insights and strategies in the digital landscape by using her expertise in technology and business to drive progress through strategic projects and visionary leadership. This involves identifying opportunities for digital transformation, developing actionable plans and recommending solutions that drive competitive growth. Lihle holds an executive doctorate of business administration from the Paris School of Business, which has equipped her with knowledge and skills in business strategy, leadership and innovation, essential for driving digital transformation across African sectors. She has spearheaded a digital transformation implementation at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research that targeted the teaching of small and medium enterprises in the manufacturing space about the capability of digital technologies. Lihle derives inspiration from the potential of technology to empower businesses and individuals, driving economic growth and societal progress. She finds that her involvement with Johannesburg Business School has helped her nurture the next generation of digital leaders.



Jess Rees  
Lead data scientist

The things that really excite you and that you find yourself enthusing to others about are what you will enjoy working on, advises Jess Rees, 29. She's found her niche as a lead data scientist for Discovery, heading up a team that researches, develops and implements machine learning, data science and AI solutions. She also works with natural language processing models, to maintain customer service excellence. Jess and her team are working on a project called Research and Development of the use of Large Language Models for use in operations, which she is proud of, because they have prioritised science and responsibility in their approach, and spent much time evaluating the AI to make sure it is working properly. She says the excellence and courage of her team, who are always open to learning new things, continually inspires her to work harder and better. Jess is an optimist who believes that the youth are becoming both more intelligent and wiser than their predecessors, and they will dare to innovate more. She says that AI technology is becoming more accessible to everyone, but it will also become more regulated, and we will know more about where it benefits us the most.







Reino Erasmus

Founder and technology designer and PhD candidate

Education is changing drastically due to new technologies such as artificial intelligence and natural language processing. Reino Erasmus, 34, is at the forefront of this revolution in learning, developing apps at Nelson Mandela University's Centre for Community Technologies such as the eReady ICT Readiness Assessment Tool, a mechanism that can help implement technology-integrated learning experiences and foster equitable educational opportunities across African communities. A decade ago Reino and his friend and business partner Greig Timkoe started a small technology design consultancy called Ampersand, which now creates customised digital solutions for global companies. By embracing the diversity of South Africa and working with people from other backgrounds, he says he was able to break from a cycle of mediocrity and start to dream bigger. He was inspired by his PhD supervisor, Darelle van Greunen, who helped shape his views on technology design. Reino is involved in several initiatives such as the B-Wise Youth Health Access digital platform and the Innovation Bridge Portal, and works for local government and the departments of basic education and science and innovation. He is using digital solutions to address critical administrative and health problems.



Mathabo Sekhonyana

Head of marketing and communications

Mathabo Sekhonyana, 33, has learned to harness the power of her voice. She's not afraid to speak up or to speak out. She works as head of marketing and communications at Adoozy Power, where she creates brand awareness, and as a black woman in the tech and marketing space, she's used her "big mouth" to carve out the career she desired. She was never afraid to ask for what she deserved concerning big business decisions or when asking for adequate payment and benefits. She's now in a position to use her voice to serve others too. She conceptualised and launched the Adoozy INPowered programme, which has a free workshop that teaches women how to defend themselves, and it won her an award. This inspired Mathabo to develop a safety feature in the Adoozy app that connects users to emergency hotlines. Mathabo is at the forefront of bringing power to South Africans, particularly when there is load-shedding. A project she is now involved in is partnering Adoozy up with Uber to bring mobile power banks directly to users. She says the youth are starting to become more entrepreneurial, and are using their tech-savvy talents to tap into myriad streams of income.



Zama Duma

Research scientist, executive, PhD scholar

Zama Duma, 30, is working in some exciting fields — catalysis and materials science — which are changing the way we power the world. In his work for the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, he is converting carbon dioxide to green methanol and other useful products such as feedstocks for the petrochemicals sector. He also works as a media officer for the Catalysis Society of South Africa. He's part of the Green Methanol Corridor Blueprint Project, which aims to localise decarbonised methanol production in the Vaal, and has the potential to create more than half a million jobs. Through working on this project, he's learned the importance of conducting research that has socio-economic benefits for us all. Although he had two science degrees, Zama had a tough time obtaining employment a few years ago, which pushed him to do further studies. He completed his MA in chemistry and is now on his way to becoming a doctor in chemical engineering. He says the global community is transitioning to green, sustainable economies, and South Africa's youth can benefit greatly from learning green skills to play their part in making a difference.



Greg Hall

Chief technology officer

Greg Hall, 25, heads up all the product development, new ideas, innovation and turning ideas into reality at Aregnum Solutions, where he is the chief technology officer. An achievement he is most proud of was creating a comprehensive system that integrates all aspects of estate management, including communication, security and efficiency in gated communities. The platform allows estate staff to manage facilities, communicate with residents and handle emergencies effectively, while residents benefit from access to community news and a panic button for immediate assistance. Through this project he learned the importance of user-centric design and cross-functional team collaboration. Greg has a drive to innovate and create solutions that improve people's lives and enhance community interactions. He says building strong relationships and collaborating with diverse teams are key to innovation. A challenge Greg faces is keeping up with the rapid pace of technological change. He believes that as digital natives, young people are well positioned to champion the integration of technology in education. They can advocate for and contribute to educational reforms that equip future generations with the skills needed for the modern economy.



Serisha Barrat

Founder and chief executive

Serisha Barrat, 30, is the founder and chief executive of Lawyered Up. As a tech entrepreneur committed to having a positive effect on society she leads two ventures aimed at making a difference. One is Lawyered Up, which uses artificial intelligence to make legal help accessible to small businesses. The other is Boardroom, which is a dating app for professionals that verifies users through LinkedIn. Serisha says creating positive change drives every aspect of her work, from developing innovative solutions to fostering transparent and trustworthy online interactions. She understands the power of leveraging technology for social good. Lawyered Up also provides three hours every week of pro bono legal support for gender-based violence (GBV) victims. In addition, Lawyered Up, through its works with the organisation Art of Charity, is involved in several initiatives aimed at addressing gender-based violence and promoting awareness of GBV. Among Serisha's achievements was speaking at the United Nations on ethics and artificial intelligence. She has also been a finalist for Standard Bank's Top Women Leaders. Additionally, she was featured in Forbes for the resilience and effectiveness of her business during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Lorato Ntsie

Managing director and civil engineering technologist

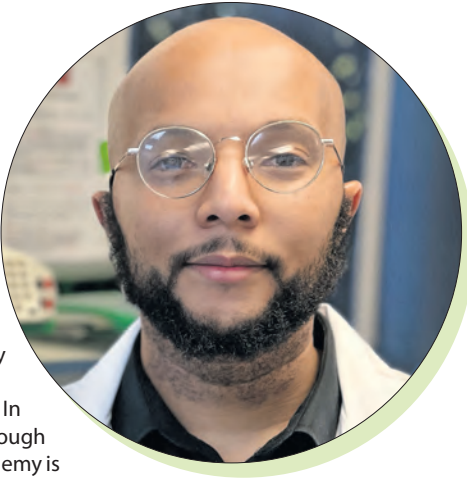
Lorato Ntsie is the managing director and civil engineer technologist at MAP 5D Afrika, where she consults for the construction and mining sector in structural design, inspections, project progress monitoring, quantity surveying, infrastructure baseline audit with drones and laser scanners, digitising and creating internal and external 2D and 3D models, and facilitates the training of digital engineers. The 35-year-old holds a national diploma in civil engineering and BTech from the University of Johannesburg. Lorato has collaborated with CYPE Software, an AEC software developer headquartered in Spain, as its distributor and trainer. Additionally, she is a board member for Task Africa, an NGO based in Rwanda to assist in digital advancement in Africa. In that capacity, she sources funds for borehole water in rural areas. Lorato envisions that the African continent will make great advancements in digital technologies as the years pass. For her, travelling around the world has widened her perspective, by witnessing the effect of technology and realising the work that still needs to be done for Africa to move towards a digital future.



Monray Edward Williams

Senior lecturer

Monray Edward Williams, 32, is a senior lecturer in the Next Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), an initiative under the department of higher education and training at North-West University (NWU). He teaches cell and molecular biology and biochemistry. As a principal investigator, he manages an independent research group focused on HIV (neuro)virology, supervising three PhD students, three MSc students, and one honours student. Monray also serves on several scientific committees, including the NWU Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. In addition, he holds educational sessions to schools through the SETH Academy and IKAMVA Youth. The SETH Academy is a university-high school programme in collaboration with industry. In 2022, he received the Novice Teacher Award for the Best Portfolio at NWU. In 2023, the university's faculty of natural and agricultural sciences recognised him as a promising next-generation researcher. He was also honoured with the Online Teaching Award for developing short online courses to support postgraduate students in completing their degrees within the expected timeframes.



Celine Meyers

Institutional researcher and BI analyst

Celine Meyers, 29, is an institutional researcher and BI analyst at the University of the Witwatersrand, responsible for analysing data to inform strategic decision-making. Her job involves collecting, processing, interpreting and managing institutional data. As part of her profession, she designs and implements surveys, generates reports and presents important insights to the university leadership and relevant stakeholders. Her work supports initiatives aimed at improving student success and institutional effectiveness. Continuing her passion for digital migration studies, Celine is doing ongoing research that examines the experiences of African migrant women in South Africa. This research seeks to explore how technology can be leveraged to provide women with greater agency and support. Celine completed her PhD in sociology from the University of Johannesburg. During her honours year, she received the Palgrave Macmillan Book Prize for producing the best research study. Celine gives back to her community by starting a fund to support other students facing financial hardships. She plans to expand her fund, continue mentoring scholars and influence policy and practice through her research.







## Dike Phatudi

Co-creator and management consultant

**D**ike Phatudi, 31, is the co-creator and management consultant at Serene Place Boutique Hotel & Conference Venue. His profession as a management consultant has seen him contribute towards building new companies in telecommunications and real estate. One of his ongoing jobs is with a global consulting firm where he is the project manager for the establishment of a new local entity that will solve South Africa's infrastructure gaps and enable better service delivery in aviation, energy, water and sanitation and smart mobility. One of Dike's business interests has enabled him to contribute towards the co-building of Serene Place. Serene is a place that is a premium touchpoint for international and local tourists, a contributor towards the growth of South Africa's tourism sector, as well as a functional platform where its conference venue facilitates, trains and upskills people to enable meaningful economic participation. Dike holds a bachelor of art triple major: law, political science and economics from the University of Witwatersrand. He is working on The Ultimate Programme, an initiatives-based community established as a call to action by like-minded young professionals, self-starters and change-makers to actively respond to the growing perception that South Africa is becoming a failed state.



## Haydn Henning

Brand manager

**H**aydn Henning, 27, is the brand manager at airline company Lift. He is responsible for executing the personality of the airline by ensuring it is consistently presented across all channels, including advertising, marketing, social media, and customer communications. Haydn conducts market research and analyses data to stay informed about market trends, customer preferences, and the competitive landscape. He is the driving force behind the "upLift SA" programme which aims to uplift South Africans by providing them with opportunities and a platform to excel. In partnership with Proudly South Africa, Haydn held a fashion show on a flight where the country's top and upcoming fashion designers presented their newest collection. He has also hosted two silent discos on a flight, the first one launched the career of Divine Mahara and the second with Zolani Mahola. In collaboration with Zolani, he produced the *Lift Anthem*, a song about hope for South African children. Haydn holds a bachelor of music from the University of Cape Town. He blended his passion for music and aviation to inspire others to dream beyond their qualifications. Haydn looks forward to the aviation industry adopting sustainable aviation and greener practices.



## Eben Proos

Senior lecturer in tourism management

**E**ben Proos, 32, is a senior lecturer in tourism management at the Central University of Technology, in Free State. As well as lecturing, he is responsible for guiding postgraduate students as the convener of the Tourism Student Committee, and community engagement. Eben is conducting research into the fields of niche tourism, dark tourism and marketing and management. He is particularly excited about niche tourism as "I know that it could have an impact on the future of the tourism industry." Winning various awards, such as the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award, has shown Eben that "through hard work and dedication anything is possible". With his work, he hopes to inspire future generations and leaders in the tourism industry. "The youth will be the ones to inspire tourists from all over the world to visit South Africa," he says. He aims to make a difference in the community and to open young students to the possibilities tourism can offer them. He counts among his mentors the late Dr Johan Hattingh, who inspired him to be dedicated and to make a difference in local communities as well as the tourism industry.



## Ayanda Cuba & Buntu Matole

Creative director and operational manager

**A**yanda Cuba, 34, is the creative director at ABCD Concepts and Buntu Matole, 36, is the operational manager at the company, a tour operator based in Khayelitsha, Cape Town's largest township. Their mission is to interact with people and businesses in communities through physical activity by offering tour experiences, such as a 10km run followed by breakfast at the famous Spinach King. Ayanda's job is to shape their brand's image and cohost their tours. Buntu's role as an operations manager is to maximise the business process and build partnerships. They both hold certificates in entrepreneurship from the Raymond Ackerman Academy and are National Qualified Cultural Guides. During the pandemic, they launched the Share A Mask campaign to teach people in Khayelitsha about wearing masks to prevent the spreading of the disease. Together, Ayanda and Buntu have started Sporting Code to inspire and expose children through educational trips, basketball coaching clinics and football and netball tournaments. They hope to witness a future in which townships are represented in the tourism sector. Ayanda and Buntu are involved in the Airbnb Academy, a project that was launched by Airbnb to help bridge the technological gap in township and rural areas.



## Paulina Ngubeni

Lecturer and coordinator

**P**aulina Ngubeni, 33, is a New Generation of Academics Programme (nGap) lecturer in the department of tourism management at Tshwane University of Technology. She is a work integrated learning (WIL) coordinator responsible for placing and monitoring students for their experiential learning. With the guidance of Paulina, students who benefit from WIL address industry challenges through entrepreneurship as it offers a unique platform to develop innovative solutions to real-world problems. Paulina is an alumnus of Haaga-Helia University's school of applied sciences and vocational teacher training. She holds a master's in tourism and hospitality management from the University of Johannesburg and is pursuing a PhD. Her research intends to develop a framework for the casino sector that can be used to empower women in host communities from corporate social responsibility spending. For Paulina, her biggest motivation is witnessing students with a similar background enrol in higher learning institutions to set new standards of excellence. She is a member of the Rotaract Club of Johannesburg and a recent project was a renovation at an early childhood development centre in Nyavini in the Eastern Cape.



## Maipato Caroline Mmako

Lecturer and learning development facilitator

**H**ope begins in the dark, but if you keep showing up and doing the right thing, you will find the light. This inspirational quote has kept Maipato Caroline Mmako, 32, going through the tough times, to the point where she realised that when she has to draw on her innermost reserves, she just takes setbacks in her stride. They no longer dishearten her, but simply become part of her growth process. Maipato's job is to prepare humanities students at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) with the skills they need to transition into higher education, such as preparing for exams and learning how to think critically. She's busy setting up an Africa by Bus expedition to Namibia for her students, with the aim of comparing UJ's sustainability policies with those of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, and between the two countries. She's proud of working with the Kliptown Youth Project, which encourages the youth to learn to read. She collected more than 300 books herself, and got a big kick when she saw the children diving into them. Higher education is undergoing transformation, says Maipato, and the sector is poised to challenge old policies and work with young people to help drive change.

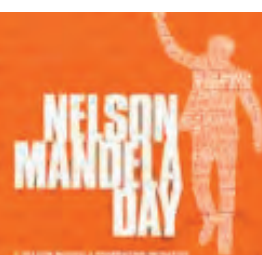


**‘Tourism is a half-exposed treasure chest. The lid is half-opened and not many of our people can get to the jewels. If we all work together, we can prise that lid open, so that the benefits of tourism, and the natural and cultural heritage of our country, can be shared by all the people in our country.’**

**Former tourism minister Tokozile Xasa**



# MANDELA DAY WALK & RUN 2024



**SATURDAY 20 JULY 2024**  
DP WORLD  
WANDERERS STADIUM  
**5km, 10km & 21km**

**#ITISINYOURHANDS**

*Proceeds go to the Nelson Mandela Foundation*



Scan here to  
Register Now or go to  
[www.mandeladay.com](http://www.mandeladay.com)

Our global theme for 2024 is **“It’s still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity.”** The context, of course, is a world where inequity continues to grow and we are still reckoning with the destructive impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which exposed existing disparities and damaged vulnerable communities in all kinds of ways. Climate change, war and conflict are leading to the displacement and impoverishment of a multitude of communities and even whole societies.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation will be framing its Mandela Day work around its priority social justice areas (early childhood development, food security, and just cities) in close collaboration with local and international partners. **The call to action is as broad and as inclusive as possible – identify those in need around you and do what you can to make a difference for them.**

**GET INVOLVED** and join us for the highly anticipated Mandela Day Walk & Run event on Saturday, 20 July 2024. This year’s event will be hosted at the DP World Wanderers Stadium.





## 200 Young South Africans 2024

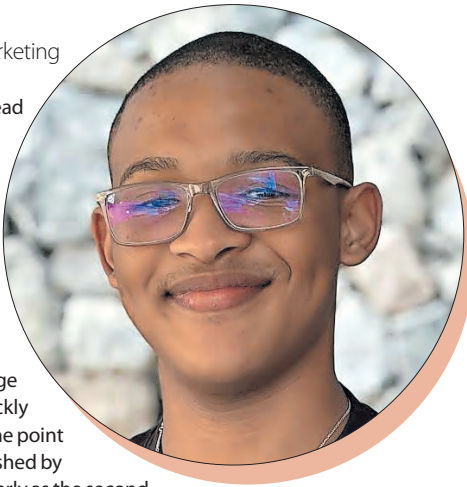
# EDITOR'S CHOICE



### Enzokuhle Sabela

Programme facilitator and head of social media and marketing

**E**nzokuhle Sabela, 21, is a programme facilitator and head of social media and marketing at Tomorrow's Leaders in Training (TLT South Africa), an organisation that guides young people through a critical point in their lives. In his work, Enzokuhle, who is studying journalism at Durban University of Technology, combines his desire for helping young people with his media and journalism skills to help the organisation. The TLT programme helped him when he was still in high school and as a young man who has navigated the same tricky waters, he became a TLT facilitator to assist others. Enzokuhle's biggest challenge is juggling his responsibilities and commitments, but "quickly learned that juggling things isn't effective because, at some point you lose control". He says having three of his articles published by the *Mail & Guardian* was a huge accomplishment, particularly as the second one, "Voter education should be included in the school curriculum", was rejected when he first submitted it. But he reworked it and it was accepted — and it gained huge traction on other platforms. Enzokuhle is also studying through the Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Africa Correspondents Corps, an initiative of the Center for African Studies at Howard University to further his professional development.



### Zwide Ndwandwe

Musician

**Z**wide Ndwandwe, 27, is a bassist, co-founder and band leader of the seven-piece improvised music ensemble, Kujenga. He also sees himself as a cultural worker, having gained experiences outside the field of music, doing work such as curating events and festivals, writing for publications like *Africa Is a Country* and *Amandla*, as well as producing and hosting a podcast on South African music. Kujenga means "build" in KiSwahili, reflecting the band's purpose. *Music in Africa* writes that Zwide comes from a family of musicians. His uncle is the late legendary trombonist and educator Brian Thusi. His mother, Mabongi Thusi, is a vocalist and lead singer of Mabongi Thusi & The Oaks. Zwide says his mother is his role model who informed his politics and outlook on life, "and without those I wouldn't be the person that I am today". He says growing from being a small local band to being the headline act at the Cape Town International Jazz is something he is most proud of. In 2019, the band released their debut album, *Nationality*, and *In the Wake* was released this year. Zwide also works with the grassroots organisation Cape Youth Collective and is working on a musical project called Free Music, Free Palestine.



### Elizabeth Leonard

Public health associate

**E**lizabeth Leonard, 31, is a public health associate at the Clinton Health Access Initiative, which works closely with the department of health to strengthen the health system and improve health outcomes. To this end her work focuses on strengthening the resilience of health systems through interventions spanning health emergency response and solar electrification. Elizabeth led the health facility solar electrification ecosystem landscaping analysis, provided technical support to develop various plans and strategies that enable the public health emergency operations centre and pandemic preparedness and supported the national roll-out of rapid diagnostic tests in clinics. Furthermore, she is developing climate-health adaptation interventions and initiatives to improve leadership and governance in the public health system. Her presentation at COP28 at the Resilience Hub on the intersection between climate and health is an achievement Elizabeth is proud of. She focused on adaptation strategies for people in the perinatal period. She says it is apparent that human-caused climate change is a health emergency that requires urgent interventions.



### Sibusiso Biyela

Freelance science writer

**S**ibusiso Biyela is a freelance science writer who explains things for a living. As a science communicator he produces science-related content for policymakers, the lay public and various other audiences. As a science writer he reports on breakthrough science happening in South Africa and the rest of the continent. And as a data journalist, he uses data and statistics to visualise and tell stories about news. The 32-year-old is currently doing freelance work as a data journalist at SABC News as well as for a number of publications including *Nature Africa*, *Brainstorm Magazine* and *ScienceLink/SciBraai*. Sibusiso is also working on two science translation projects, the aim of which is to make scientific discourse accessible in African languages. One is the Masakhane Decolonise Science project, where the team is creating a Google Translate for science. The other initiative he co-produced is a science podcast in isiZulu. Among the challenges Sibusiso has faced is discovering as an adult that he has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Things fell apart after he matriculated and the structures of childhood and school fell away, but he has found ways to deal with having ADHD. Sibusiso is driven to excel by the feeling he has when he masters a new thing.



### Khumo Kumalo

Student and founder of Misunderstood

**K**humo Kumalo, 19, is the founder of Misunderstood, a website he manages. Khumo also hosts a podcast that discusses a multitude of topics, from elections in South Africa to the Israel and Palestine crisis, as well as discussions about "groove". The podcast provides a platform to unpack pressing issues relevant to the youth and offers a space for young people to share their stories. Khumo writes the newsletter *94 was Misunderstood*, which aims to explore South Africa's history and evolving political landscape, reflecting on the vision leaders had for a post-democratic South Africa. He says this project taught him that young people need to take responsibility for their future. Khumo also believes more should be done to educate the youth about politics as South Africa moves into a new era of coalition government. One of his challenges was how to grow Misunderstood to reach more people. He stopped focusing on the numbers and cared more about the content and its substantive value over the past three years and the site has grown. Khumo believes that with conversations about climate change, education and social justice being sidelined by many politicians, the youth will begin to chart their own path as they become more aware.



### Nthabiseng Mabetlela

Junior consultant

**N**thabiseng Mabetlela, 24, works at Africa Talent by Deloitte as a junior consultant. Africa Talent identifies and recruits people from across Africa from entry- to senior-level professionals and Nthabiseng works as an extended member of the information technology audit team for the Deloitte Netherlands firm. From a social engagement perspective, she is a member of the Youth Policy Committee at Youth@SAIIA (the South African Institute of International Affairs) where she had previously pushed for the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning through co-authoring and being a lead editor on youth statements. Additionally, she took leadership roles in the formation of the South African Youth Statement to COP27 and COP28. Nthabiseng is also a founder of The Sharing Electricity with Neighbours (SEWN) campaign, a project formed through beVisioneers: The Mercedes-Benz Fellowship and seeks to improve access to solar electricity through partnerships between neighbours with solar-equipped homes and those without solar. She says the achievement she is most proud of is being selected for the first group of beVisioneers.



**'To the youth of today, I also have a wish to make: be the scriptwriters of your destiny and feature yourselves as stars that showed the way towards a brighter future.'**

**Nelson Mandela**





Mail & Guardian

2024

# 200 YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS

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