

# PASSION

AN AWCA MAGAZINE

[www.awca.co.za](http://www.awca.co.za)

## PANDEMIC LESSONS

- Women(omics)
- Education reimagined
- Mental health first!

## FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

- Lend A Helping Hand

## INSPIRATION

Celebrating the 2020 Recognition Awards Winners

## PIVOTING IS THE WAY

Digital Finally Taking Centre Stage

Inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

**SINDI MABASO-KOYANA**

*“Seeing the impact I’ve had on younger people honestly fulfils me!”*



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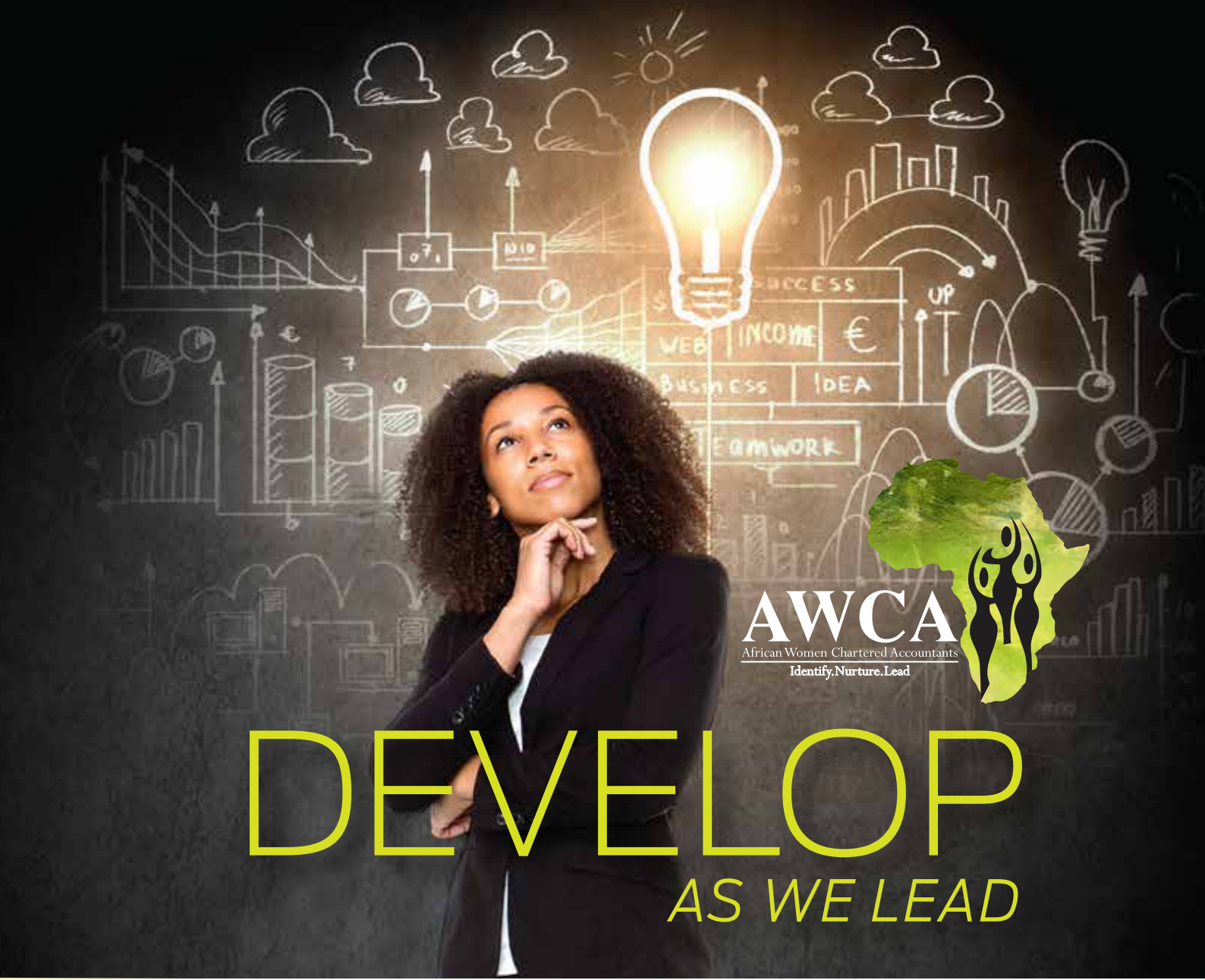
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**AWCA**  
African Women Chartered Accountants  
Identify. Nurture. Lead



# DEVELOP AS WE LEAD



**1 24**  
Bursary Students



**7 308**  
Black Qualified CAs

## MEMBERSHIP TIER

**R1250**  
Core  
Membership  
(Qualified CA)

**R150**  
Student

**R650**  
Trainee  
Accountant

**R75k**  
Corporate  
Membership

**R1250**  
Friend of AWCA

# STANDING TALL IN THE



# FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

**A**s I reflect on the tumultuous year that is 2020, I can't help but smirk at how hopeful we all were to start the new decade with a deafening bang. Never, in my wildest dreams, did I envision 2020 racking up such tragedy and anxiety — but most of all, testing our resilience not only as a nation but the human race.

An economic recession, rating downgrades, the dire state of our SOEs and now COVID-19, one has to question what else could go wrong? We added new phrases — such as working-from-home, webinars, new normal, social distancing, flattening the curve and lockdown — to our vocabularies. We learnt new, and brushed up on old, skills and spent the most time we had ever spent with our families. The government was faced with the arduous task of balancing health versus economic objectives. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent lockdown, also laid bare the inequalities in our society.

According to health experts, daily infection and hospitalisation rates had been on a welcome decline when the President announced that the entire country would move to Alert Level 2 as of midnight 17 August, allowing most economic activity to resume — with additional restrictions in place. Our international borders, however, remain closed. Unfortunately, there are other statistics in our midst that continue to send chills down our spines — those of gender-based violence (GBV) cases being reported. As the AWCA, we would like to urge everyone to support all women and children impacted by these deplorable acts and circumstances.

To help mitigate the economic, social and health-care fallout of the current pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced government's R500 billion COVID-19 economic stimulus and social relief package. The Solidarity Fund, a rapid response fund supported by the private and public sectors and chaired by our previous Woman of Substance recipient Ms Gloria Serobe, has raised over R2.6 billion. We had the honour of engaging the Solidarity Fund's CEO Ms Nomkhita Nqweni, on Wednesday 3 June, where she unpacked their mandate and the work done so far. The UIF has paid out more than R1.6 billion into employers' bank accounts. These noteworthy initiatives should spur us on to be active citizens who hold

leaders accountable and ensure that assistance goes where it is most needed. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisations (WHO), has pointed out that the corrupt practices around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are tantamount to "murder". We support government actions in curtailing such practices and calling the wrongdoers to order. We would also like to acknowledge and commend private and public sector leadership for taking pay cuts to contribute towards the fight against COVID-19. We also encourage you to support smaller charities working directly with communities — be it through food, shelter or education, much like the AWCA.

The pandemic has forced the postponement of physical events, therefore crippling fundraising efforts. As we continue navigating this unprecedented chapter, let's keep this reality in mind and donate where we can. In that light, the AWCA board came to the hard decision to cancel the 2020 Woman of Substance Fundraising Banquet. However, we continued with the annual Conference themed, *South Africa Re-imagined*, hosted virtually on Saturday, 8 August. We congratulate all our Recognition Award recipients as well as the President's Ambassador Award winners. A big congratulations, in particular, goes to the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Ms Sindi Mabaso-Koyana. A founding member of the organisation, trailblazer and a living embodiment of the AWCA ethos "Develop as you lead", Ms Koyana is truly the heart of the AWCA.

Earlier in the year, the board revisited Vision 2020 to assess whether the strategies adopted over the past 10 years had been effective in supporting our future goals. Each year, we are guided by our three-tier strategy — 'Identify, Nurture and Lead' — offering various tier-relevant programmes to our membership base. Upon reflection, we realised that there were glaring gaps in the 'Identify' tier that urgently needed to be addressed. We came to the conclusion that the AWCA may have grown in leaps and bounds — expanding at all levels — however, we must never neglect our core base. The 'Identify' tier feeds all other tiers and is the core reason for the AWCA's existence — which is to develop and nurture South Africa's future leaders in order to achieve sustainable economic development and

transformation. That was the genesis of Vision 2025. Coming out of our strategy session, we were tasked with being intentionally impactful, illustrating how everything ladders up to our larger purpose in the country and ultimately, the world.

The first initiative on our 2020 calendar was the ITC Preparation Workshop, sponsored by LifeCheq. I would like to thank the planning committee and all the attendees for making the day a success. A huge and hearty congratulations to the 2149 aspirant Chartered Accountants who passed ITC January 2020. In the same breath, I'd also like to encourage the unsuccessful candidates to remain positive as there will be another opportunity to retake the test later in the year.

The AWCA welcomed seven young female recipients to the AWCA Bursary Fund, bringing the number of funded students up to 124. In addition to receiving funding and resources that assist them in their studies, the bursary recipients are also allocated a mentor. We thank our sponsors, members and friends of the AWCA for making the Bursary Fund possible.

To realise its 'Identify, Nurture and Lead' objectives, the AWCA thrives on volunteers and donations. Of all our membership tiers, the students seem to be the most vulnerable during this unprecedented time. We launched the *Adopt-a-Student* initiative to meet students' basic needs such as data, pre-loved laptops, food, toiletries and many others. The AWCA office is ready to pair donors with beneficiaries.

In addition, we urge members to have a look at the AWCA Lockdown Diaries on our social media platforms to find motivation, inspiration or solace during this period. No matter how overwhelmed we feel or how solemn things seem, we have to keep picking ourselves back up and moving forward — therein lies life's secret formula. As with all other dire chapters, this too shall pass! Stay positive and safe.

Yours in service,  
**Zama Khanyile**

President of the AWCA



# 2020 AWCA BOARD MEMBERS

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Meet the team responsible  
for steering the AWCA to greater heights.

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**ZAMA KHANYILE CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** President  
**Job Title:** Fund Manager: Umnotho Fund, National Empowerment Fund (NEF)  
**What I Know Now:** “When all is said and done, life is a blessing. Cherish it with every triumph or trial it may throw your way. Embrace the good, the bad and the ugly as these are your building blocks. And with that, I have learned to live boldly and with consistent intention, knowing that every step I take draws me closer to the person I was meant to be.”



**BUHLE HANISE CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Deputy President  
**Job Title:** Chief Financial Officer, BAIC SA  
**What I Know Now:** “Pursuing and living your passions is vital — success and all other aspirations will follow naturally thereafter.”



**LEBOGANG SENNE CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** AWCA Secretary General  
**Job Title:** Technical Director, Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA)  
**What I Know Now:** “Never assume that ‘it will never happen to you’ — and that’s in both the positive and negative aspects of your career and life. Work hard for the things you dream of achieving but also be prepared for those setbacks that serve to stretch and grow you further.”



**THINA TEMBANI CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Strategic Alliances

**Job Title:** Executive Assistant to Rest of Africa CEO, Rand Merchant Bank

**What I Know Now:** "Nothing significant can ever be achieved without hard work and opportunity. Success happens when hard work and an opportunity intersect. In order to fulfil our highest potential and purpose, we must do all that we do to serve others, and not merely for self-gratification."



**PUMLA NHANTSI [née MOLOPE] CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Marketing and Public Relations

**Job Title:** Fund Manager, Visio Fund Management

**What I Know Now:** "Never dwell or be despondent in times of failure — allow yourself a moment of self-pity, then start again with a new plan. Failure is key to success as it teaches us not to be complacent, gives us an opportunity to rewrite our story and forces us to be persistent."



**GUGULETHU MAYISELA CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Leadership Academy and Entrepreneurs Forum

**Job Title:** Managing Director, New Era Projects

**What I Know Now:** "There is very little in life that truly matters. Live with gratitude in your heart, humility in your mind and peace in your soul."



**PHETOGO MABASO CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Finance and Power Tea Portfolios

**Job Title:** Senior Consultant — Financial Solutions & IFRS 17 Head

**What I Know Now:** "Ecclesiastes 3:1 'To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.' As we find ourselves in this dark season, may we be reminded that it too, like every other season, shall pass. Spring will come again. We will laugh again. We will rebuild. We will be with loved ones again. And we will be able to do the things we once loved, again."



**NONKULULEKO SIGUDU CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** KwaZulu-Natal Chairperson

**Job Title:** COO at Sphola Consulting

**What I Know Now:** "I have come to learn to seize each opportunity and take each chance I get. The Bible scripture Ecclesiastes 9: 11, serves as my daily reminder of this lesson. It reads: 'I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being in the right place at the right time.'"



**NOKUKHANYA NGQONGWA CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** Western Cape Chairperson

**Job Title:** Currently on a sabbatical

**What I Know Now:** "Facing challenges helps with our critical thinking. Hurdles force us to think outside the box and help us build up mental stamina."



**HLENGIWE NDELELA CA(SA)**

**AWCA Board Designation:** KwaZulu-Natal Deputy Chairperson

**Job Title:** Audit Partner and Head of Assurance, Ernst & Young

**What I Know Now:** "All things are possible, regardless of where you come from or the number of times that you fall. What matters is rising and trying again. In fact, your background should serve as motivation — especially for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds — rather than a limitation!"

# THE 2020 AWCA BURSARY FUND RECIPIENTS



**YOLOKAZI HOZA**  
**Hometown:** Durban, KwaZulu-Natal  
**Current University:** University of KwaZulu-Natal (PMB)

**Degree:** 4th year, Postgraduate Diploma in Accountancy (CTA)

**How long have you been funded by the AWCA?**  
 AWCA started funding me in 2019 when I was in third year — and again this year as I tackle my Honours.

**Dream career after qualifying:** I'm currently undecided about which career path to follow. That said, I enjoy Management Accounting and Finance, as well as Auditing. I started a food venture last year, which is currently on hold. Therefore, I will most likely end up in the investment sector while pursuing entrepreneurship on the side.

**Motto that I live by:** *"I believe in working diligently and always leaving room for improvement — be it work or my character. As we all know, emotional intelligence plays as important a role as intellect in our success."*



True to our  
commitment of  
developing more  
young

women of colour  
into upstanding  
CA(SA)s, our  
Bursary Fund is  
helping this year's  
seven beneficiaries  
get closer to their  
dreams!

**NOKUKHANYA NGWENYA**

**Hometown:** Dundee, KwaZulu-Natal  
**Current University:** University of the Free State

**Degree:** 5th year, Postgraduate Diploma in Chartered Accountancy

**How long have you been funded by the AWCA?**  
Since the start of 2020

**Dream career after qualifying:** A Chartered Accountant in business – preferably at a bank where I can gain more knowledge, and insights, in investment banking.

**Motto that I live by:** "Take one step at a time, but always forward!"



**THELMA MOKOKA**

**Hometown:** Polokwane, Limpopo  
**Current University:** Nelson Mandela University

**Degree:** 4<sup>th</sup> Year, Honours in BCom Accounting (PGDA)

**How long have you been funded by the AWCA?**  
2020 was my first year of being funded by the AWCA.

**Dream career after qualifying:** My goal is to get into corporate finance.

**Motto that I live by:** "Every day lived is a second choice."



**GUGU MOTHA**

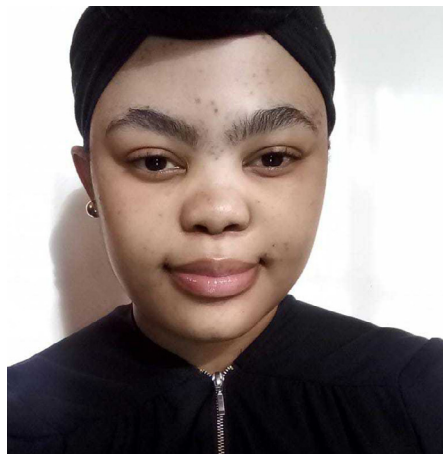
**Hometown:** Mamelodi, Gauteng  
**Current University:** University of Johannesburg

**Degree:** Honours, Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting Sciences

**How long have you been funded by the AWCA?**  
Since 2020

**Dream career after qualifying:** I hope to craft a worthwhile career in taxation.

**Motto that I live by:** "Every wall is a door".



**KATLEHO LECHEKO**

**Hometown:** Ficksburg, Free State  
**Current University:** UNISA

**Degree:** 5<sup>th</sup> year, Postgraduate diploma in Applied Accounting Sciences

**How long have you been funded by the AWCA?**  
Since 2020

**Dream career after qualifying:** A practising CA(SA).

**Motto that I live by:** "Be someone who makes everybody feel like a somebody!"



**WENDY MAPOKGOLE**

**Hometown:** Vosloorus, Gauteng  
**Current University:** University of the Witwatersrand

**Degree:** 4th Year, Postgraduate Diploma in Accountancy

**How long have you been funded by AWCA?**  
Since 2019

**Dream career after qualifying:** I hope to become a Financial Analyst or get into a financial advisory role.

**Motto that I live by:** "Always show up for yourself, no matter how difficult it is."



**TSHEPANANG OSIILE**

**Hometown:** Klerksdorp, North West  
**Current University:** North West University, Vaal Campus

**Degree:** 6<sup>th</sup> Year, Honours in Chartered Accountancy

**How long have you been funded by AWCA?**  
Since 2019

**Dream career after qualifying:** Landing myself a role in the banking industry would be first prize.

**Motto that I live by:** "Try to make the best of what you have!"



# ***REPORT BACK*** **AWCA STUDENT** **CHAPTERS**

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Through various initiatives, the AWCA Student Chapters have been instrumental in spreading the Chartered Accountancy gospel around the country. Executive committee members straddle Student Chapter responsibilities with their studies, stopping at nothing to contribute to the mother body's vision of increasing the number of Black females CA(SA)s by a huge margin.



Established in May 2017 by the very driven Ms Lungile Tshabalala, the Stellenbosch Student Chapter has since attracted many female students with big aspirations of, someday, conquering the Accounting world. We have since altered the Stellenbosch University Student Chapter's mandate to become inclusive, and allow for a broader membership base that is not only limited to females and students of colour. The goal, we decided, was rather to attract as many Accounting students as possible to create awareness around the AWCA's vision and values. Since its existence, the Student Chapter has hosted the following annual events — *Take a Child to University*, *Soft-Skills Workshop* and the *Mentorship High Tea*. Charity work in the neighbouring, disadvantaged communities forms the core of the Student Chapter as we strongly believe in building others as we climb. Though lockdown thwarted the 2020 event calendar and campaign plans, we are determined to carry forward the organisation's mandate as soon as a sense of normalcy is restored.

Among some of our proudest achievements since the establishment of the Student Chapter three years ago is the very first High Tea that was hosted in 2017. Sindi Mabaso-Koyana, Executive Chairperson of AWCA Investment Holdings and Aarti Takoordeen, CFO of the JSE, were the headline speakers. Another highlight was the Easter Egg Hunt that we organised for the Grade R learners at Kayamandi Primary School in April 2019. Our Student Chapter is ready to take up space and cement itself. Therefore, our main goal is to attract dedicated members to join an executive team that will lead the Chapter to greater heights in 2021.

## STELLENBOSCH STUDENT CHAPTER

The AWCA Monash Student Chapter, now AWCA IIE MSA as of 2019, was launched in March 2017. Our mandate is to develop students, equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to someday excel in their corporate careers — specifically in the fields of Finance, Investment Banking, Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Taxation and Auditing.

In 2018, we hosted our first-ever women's hike called #Hike2Success where we invited the Wits Student Chapter and AWCA board members — including AWCA President Ms Zama Khanyile CA(SA) and Deputy President Ms Buhle Hanise CA(SA). The hike, which doubled up as a sanitary pad drive, was hosted in commemoration of the late Mama Albertina Sisulu. The sanitary pads were donated to an on-campus community engagement group called JCI. At the beginning of 2019, we hosted #YouAreNotAVictim, an interactive event based on a much-needed discussion about the discrimination and sexual harassment women face in the workplace. This was followed by a Picnic Day in September 2019, to encourage students and members to take a break from their studies and as well as create awareness around our sanitary pad drive. We wrapped up 2019 with an outreach day, where we spent quality time disseminating food parcels at the Onthatile Children's Ministry Home — and also provided meals to the children of Zandspruit. We also participated in the Santa Shoebox Drive, where we collected over 60 boxes containing essential items for children. These were donated towards the Santa Shoebox Organisation.

With all our events on hold due to the global pandemic, next on our cards is to usher in a strong leadership team in 2021 and continue organising insightful events, provide student support through tutorials and host more outreach activities in our surrounding communities.



## MONASH STUDENT CHAPTER





The UNISA Student Chapter was established in the latter part of 2016 and was registered with the AWCA mother body by early 2017. Given the institution's distance learning nature, the founding leaders saw a need to unite UNISA's black female Accounting students. The idea was for the Student Chapter to serve as a platform that would support UNISA students on their journey to becoming CA(SA)s, as well as present to them insights into what their future career paths would look like through exposure to industry leaders and other worthy initiatives. In 2018, the Student Chapter underwent a difficult tenure with the passing of its then President Ms Fezeka Sibanyoni. The Chapter struggled to get back on its feet until Ms Lydia Mosotho and Ms Nonjabulo Gumbi took it upon themselves to resume all plans. In 2019, a new executive committee was elected, giving the Chapter much-needed direction and a promising future.

Some of our proudest highlights in the past include building a sponsorship relationship with the Auditor-General South Africa and visiting numerous high schools to offer career guidance. Among these schools was the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. So far, our Chapter has managed to maintain fruitful relationships with the Accounting Faculty and other recognised student bodies such as ABASA and ASSA. 2019 proved to be our biggest year yet – we managed to recruit more than 300 students to join the Student Chapter. This, after hosting our motivational Self-Love Lunch, aimed at introducing the UNISA Student Chapter. 20% of these recruits weren't Accounting students but expressed how our events always contribute to their individual growth. We also held a successful formal event where we invited former AWCA President Ms Lesego Sennelo to enlighten us on the journey to becoming a CA(SA) and #NotInMyName secretary Mr Themba Masango tackled gender-based violence.

Going forward, our main goal is to work closely with the collective leadership of the AWCA and to support more of our members on their journey to becoming influential leaders.

## UNISA STUDENT CHAPTER

The Wits Student Chapter was launched in May 2016, guided by the broader AWCA pillars and aimed at accelerating the identification, and nurturing, of aspiring CA(SA)s. The Student Chapter grew significantly under Catherine Sefara's tutelage, our very first chairperson.

Our most significant achievement to date was being awarded the Best New Society and the Most Outstanding Society at the Wits University Leadership Awards in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Some of the outreach programmes we organised in the latter part of 2019 include food donation and sanitary pad drives, as well as the Menstruation Education Campaign, in collaboration with QRATE, at the Home of Hope for Girls. At our annual Meet and Greet in late 2019, Wits Academic Trainee Ms Khetiwe Sibiya shared her personal career journey with our members and advised us on how to conquer Wits' infamous 'The Edge'.

Ms Zimkhitha Zatu, Ms Catherine Sefara and Ms Reitumetse Motsoeneng graced our 2019 year-end function with their presence, where they ushered in the new 2019/2020 executive team and shared insights on how to climb the corporate ladder.

Though many of our 2020 plans had to be modified due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still committed to serving our society and community as we adjust to this new reality. We are in the process of hosting two virtual initiatives – the first will be a session where we plan to discuss the economic impact of COVID-19 and the second, virtual tutorials for our members. We also hope to donate non-perishables as part of our outreach programme.



## WITS UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHAPTER



## THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO STUDENT CHAPTER

The University of Limpopo Student Chapter launched in April 2013, with the clear aim of accelerating the advancement of qualified and aspiring African female Chartered Accountants by providing active support and access to opportunities.

So far 2015, 2016 and 2017 were the biggest years for our Student Chapter. With the full backing of the AWCA national office, AGS and the School of Accounting, initiatives such as *Power Tea*, *Take A Student To Work* and various other outreach programmes took off successfully. 2019, on the other hand, proved quite a difficult year as the Student Chapter had financial constraints, which also saw a drop in the number of members who attended our initiatives.

We are currently pouring all our energy into securing enough funding to re-build the Student Chapter so we can continue serving our members purposefully. We will emerge stronger in 2021 – that's a fact!

“  
WHERE  
OTHERS SEEK  
SELF-INTEREST

**MPHO MOOKAPELE CA(SA)**

Acting CEO & CFO of Energy & Water SETA

Category: Overall Winner

TOP 35 - UNDER - 35 AWARDS

”  
ACTS IN  
THE PUBLIC  
INTEREST

Building a powerful and prosperous nation that acts in the public interest is central to tackling the country's most pressing challenges. To prosper, we need highly skilled, trusted leaders with the financial and strategic competence to solve today's challenges with rigour and foresight. CAs(SA) are trained to manage ethical threats and understand that integrity is the basis of developing a sustainable nation that yields positive social and economic returns. That's why thought leader and top executive **Mpho Mookapele CA(SA)**, CFO of Energy & Water SETA and Acting CEO of Energy and Water SETA, uses her role and expertise to drive public good and believes in doing things the right way, even if it takes a little longer.

Partner with a trusted leader and someone who makes it their business to look after the integrity of your business.

Tag us on #CountMeIn | To read more about Mpho Mookapele [click here](#)

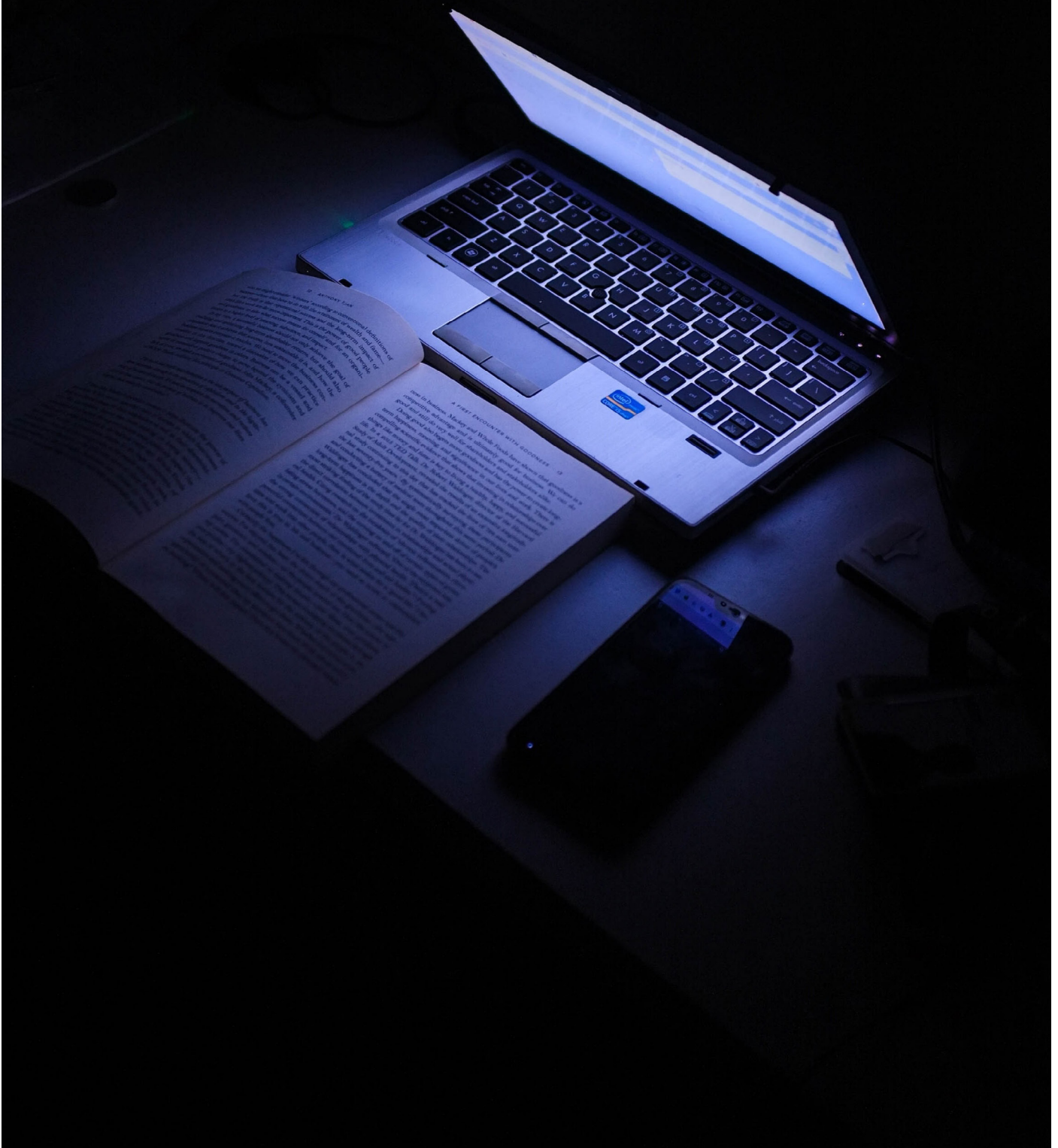


**SAICA**

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE  
OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

develop.influence.lead.

# REMOTE LEARNING INSIGHTS



# The advent of COVID-19 may have threatened to derail students' plans of completing the 2020 academic year, but not all has been lost according to Senior Lecturer **BOITUMELO KUZWAYO CA(SA)**.

**W**hen South Africa recorded its first coronavirus case on 5 March 2020, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) was in its fourth week of the academic year. First-year students were still acclimatising to life on campus and final year students assumed they were 10 months away from completing their qualifications. As a precautionary measure, all contact classes at the institution were suspended from 16 March. Most, if not all, students went home after the announcement of a national lockdown, leaving behind their textbooks in the hopes that they would return to their on or off-campus residences after the initial three-week lockdown. Pre-COVID, the School of Accounting (SOA) made use of limited blended learning – a mixture of contact and online learning – with a larger focus on the former. The immediate introduction of remote learning led to the complete isolation of academics and students from campus life and the introduction of what many assumed would, only, be an emergency method of learning. Little did we know that a complete overhaul awaited us!

## STUDENT CHALLENGES

To gain an understanding of students' experiences of remote learning and forthcoming expectations, the College of Business and Economics (CBE) conducted a survey which garnered a 29% response rate – that's 5,861 students to be exact; including undergraduate (87%) and postgraduate (13%) students. Below are some of the challenges highlighted and insights that emerged from the survey:

• **Access to a suitable device to actively engage in remote learning such as a laptop or tablet.** A student needs this to engage their learning material effectively and to execute some assessments and/or assignments. 63% and 32% of the respondents used a cellphone and/or laptop respectively for remote learning. This meant that most students who used a smartphone as a primary mode of learning may have been at a disadvantage because the device may not have been adequate for learning purposes.

• **Lack of access to a stable internet connection and sufficient data to allow for remote learning.** Most, if not all students, depended on Wi-fi connection and computer laboratories provided on campus due to lack of funds to buy a laptop and/or data to assist with learning. The lockdown and the inability to access these university resources, especially for students in rural and semi-rural areas, further exacerbated their ability to carry out remote learning effectively.

• **The suitability of students' lockdown learning environments whilst in lockdown played a major role.** Many students live in either over-populated or confined homes, without a

designated study area, or homes where they are expected to perform household chores at the same time as live lectures during the day – or when they should be studying.

• **With load-shedding being such a disruptive facet in our lives, stable electricity supply also posed a serious challenge for remote learning.** The above highlight the socio-economic factors and inequalities that constantly plague our country. To address some of these challenges, the institution provided students with 30GB monthly data (10GB anytime and 20GB night owl). WhatsApp groups were set up as platforms to post notifications, conduct tutorial sessions and consult with tutors to reduce data consumption. The 20GB led to some students utilising night data to download learning material. NSFAS-fund-

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“Despite the hurdles introduced by remote learning, that are exacerbated by the socio-economic factors and inequality in our country, 78% of students bestowed their lectures a distinction for online support. More importantly, 76% of students still feel enthused and determined to succeed.”

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ed students would be provided with laptops and, where possible, some textbooks would be made available in e-book format. Furthermore, academics needed to be mindful of power cuts when it came to assessments.

## LECTURERS FELT THE HEAT TOO

Lecturers, on the other hand, were faced with:

- Balancing working remotely with family responsibilities, whilst tending to student queries after hours or during night owl shifts – possibly due to data constraints;
  - Being cognisant of students' data challenges by preparing comprehensive material that did not consume too much data;
  - Striking a fine balance between communicating effectively without inundating students with too much information which could lead to students experiencing heightened stress;
  - Considering mechanisms, through engagement with students, to determine whether they indeed understood the material before the assessments that ultimately contribute to their final mark.
- Assessments posed the biggest challenge for academics. They needed to be comprehensive, rigorous and available to students for a reason-

able amount of time to accommodate those students who are unfamiliar with laptops to perform online assessments – while still maintaining pre-COVID assessment standards. What added to the challenge was that there was no one-size-fits-all approach. Judgement, through consultation with colleagues and moderators, needed to be applied by academics when it came to assessments.

## INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSION

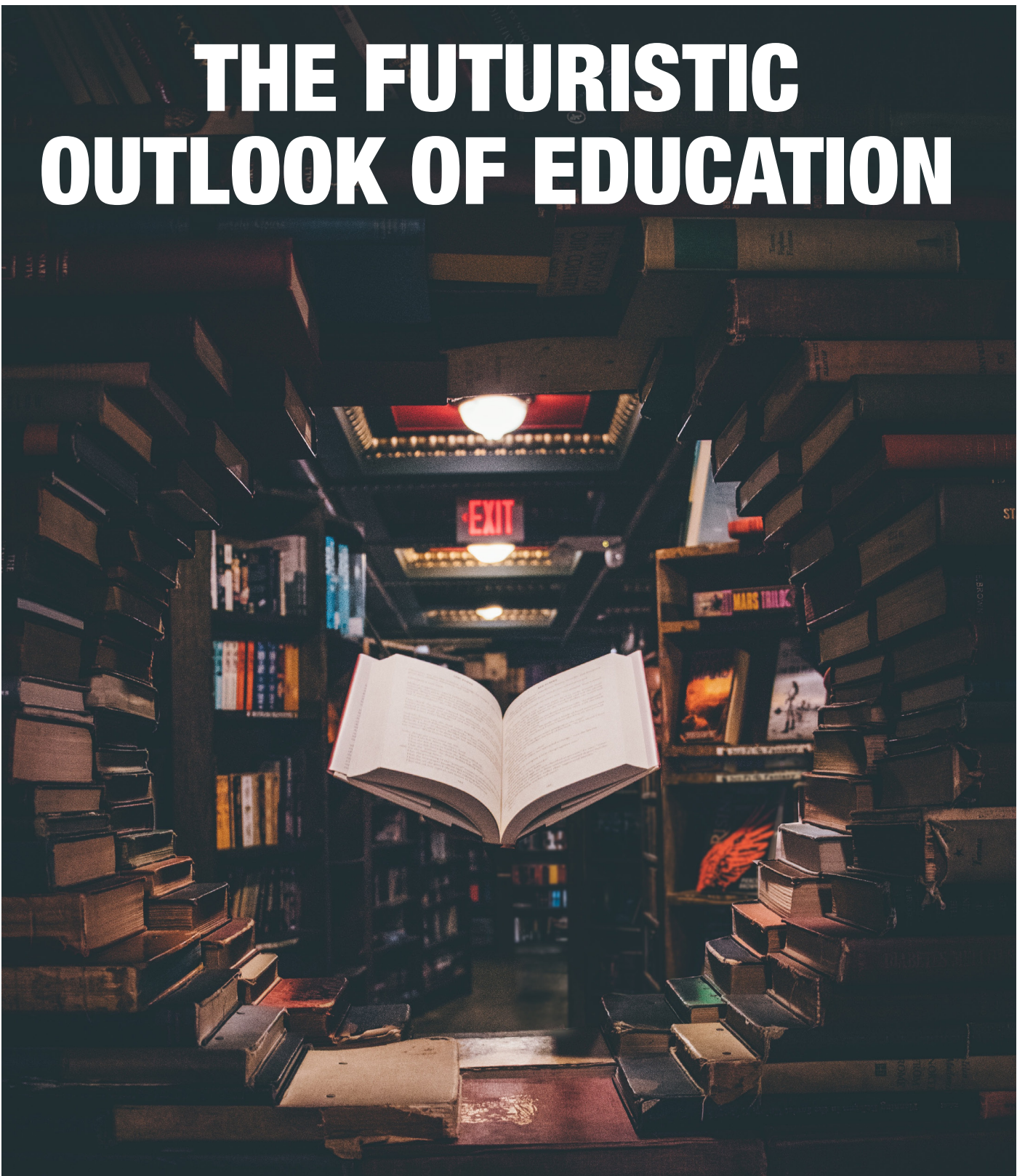
In hindsight – despite the challenges faced – we can't ignore some good that came out of remote learning. All recorded lectures, tutorials and revision sessions are readily available for students to access and download at their convenience. Students who missed any lectures as a result of data connectivity, load-shedding or other unforeseen reasons can access this material, too, and so can those preparing for supplementary assessments. Furthermore, academics were stretched to foster individual growth as well as innovation in teaching and learning.

Despite the hurdles introduced by remote learning, that are exacerbated by the socio-economic factors and inequality in our country, 78% of students bestowed their lectures a distinction for online support. More importantly, 76% of students still feel enthused and determined to succeed.



**Boitumelo Kuzwayo CA(SA)** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Johannesburg's Department of Commercial Accounting as well as the Founder and Director of Illimite Strategic Holdings. She kickstarted her Accounting career at Deloitte & Touche in 2010 where she was first a trainee Accountant for two years, then a Senior Consultant in the Strategy and Innovation division before transitioning to academia in 2015.

# THE FUTURISTIC OUTLOOK OF EDUCATION



**ZAMANGUNI GUMEDE CA(SA)**, an Accounting and Taxation lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, on why it will take more than bridging the digital resource gap for the remote learning scale to truly be balanced.

It happened so rapidly, and many are still grappling to hold on to what once was. The COVID-19 pandemic is a reality-altering crisis that has left no stone unturned. Similar to several countries globally, South Africa closed economic activities to prevent its spread and according to the government, prepare the health system to adequately accommodate the high number of anticipated cases. As such, educational institutions were also closed and all related activities transferred to virtual platforms. Where some institutions already had an online presence, others either didn't and if they did, it wasn't on a grand scale. Needless to say, the regulated lockdown period led to significant disruptions to an academic year that had been meticulously scheduled.

#### **A NEW WAY OF LEARNING**

The learning environment presented on virtual platforms is new for both the educator and the student. Accordingly, the opportunity to find oneself in solid ground should be afforded both ways, and high levels of empathy must be exercised until comfortable ground is reached by all. Not only have the structures of the curriculum and the policies that guide its assessment been challenged, but the mode of curriculum delivery as well. Mechanisms are continuously being developed to adapt the traditional curriculum to remote learning. While there are long-standing theoretical models that affirm pedagogies adopted by educators, new and possible combinations of models will have to be considered to still meet the objectives of the subject matter.

Further to curriculum adjustments, the disruption of the traditional assessment practices ignites the question of whether the virtual alternative using online resources holds the same weight as the former. Without proper exam proctoring tools, this is a major challenge. On the one hand, many more considerations are taken into account in the preparation of online assessments such as training, online content creation and customisation, maintaining IT specialists' involvement, network access considerations, and following up with inactive student accounts to provide alternative solutions. On the other hand, students face the anxiety of adapting their study plans to the home environment, concentration levels, lack of motivation, feeling out of touch (which weighs heavily on their confidence), network access in the area in which they live, inappropriate electronic tools to enable navigation of the material that needs to be covered – to mention just a few issues. A combination of lost time, continuous changes, and uncertainty (including the delay of assessments) lead to a threefold dilemma in the academic project – namely, the essential element of learning, feedback on content strengths and areas of improvement being lost. The fundamental questions of whether the student is able to continue with their learning, how they will do that, and what next item to implement are not timeously addressed under the current learning conditions. Thus, as literature shows, the loss of this information can have harmful long-term effects.

Considering that students no longer need to be on-site to be part of the educational activities of an institution, accessibility of education has now widened its reach to marginalised groups.

Although ideal and taking on a progressive direction, there will likely be substantial disparities between students' situations. Average household sizes in South Africa according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) comprise 3.3 persons. It is questionable whether effective virtual learning can take place in the home. In addition, approximately 10% of households have access to the internet, from which 2% relates to rural areas. Stats SA found that South Africa had 36.54 million internet users, of which 96% were mobile internet users. Connectivity through a small hand mobile device, being the more feasible alternative, is used by students to engage with the varying volumes of course material. Efforts to bridge the digital resource gap by educational institutions have been commendable, providing hardware and data support albeit with its own set of challenges. Even so, it may take a substantial amount of time to reach an appropriate level of access and equality in the learning opportunities available to every student.

#### **NEW SKILLS REQUIRED**

Accompanying the emergency remote learning environment to save the 2020 academic year, is the underlying issue of the widening inequality gap. To add salt to the wound, there is the uncertainty of the labour market that awaits the emerging graduates. Not only is the nation going through a health crisis, but this is also coupled with a recessionary period. According to Stats SA, the unemployment rate in Q1 of 2020 was sitting at 30.1% and some economists' predictions for the rest of the year are slightly higher. The cost for new graduates who obtain qualifications during a recession is substantial and unequal as its effects last for a long period.

In a move to adapt the traditional knowledge-based education system to the new employer that emerges from the pandemic, to a large extent, institutions of higher learning would ideally have to align their curriculum design to meet the new skills needed. Before this is perfectly achieved, employers may have to challenge themselves in amending conventional recruitment processes by assessing soft skills such as adaptability, critical thinking, and the use of emotional intelligence in stressful circumstances.

In developing competencies through education, creativity will have to play an essential role in problem-solving to develop valuable and relevant skills that can survive in the evolution of fast-paced artificial intelligence. Embedded within the basic education phases, independence and accountability for own work will have to be enhanced components of the teaching and learning system. This will ensure self-motivation, perseverance and increase the student retention rate at different levels of education.

As most educational institutions aim not to leave any student behind as a result of this aggressive disruption to the education environment, it may be a noble desire that does not have its basis on the South African socio-economic situation but must be attempted anyway. Various factors will need to be considered to customise the future education model to the South African landscape and eventually the global one.



**Zamanguni Gumede CA (SA) is a lecturer in the field of Accounting and Taxation at the School of Accounting, Economics, and Finance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). She is a qualified Chartered Accountant (SA) who holds a Masters in Accountancy (UKZN), an Honours BComm (UNISA), post-graduate degree and BComm Accounting undergraduate degree (UKZN). Her passion lies in transferring knowledge to young people in areas with limited access to science and mathematics, related career path information through various initiatives – including mentoring and CA advancement career consultation. Being a lecturer aligns with her passion, as she empowers young minds and advances the Chartered Accountancy profession.**

**After her TIPP articles, she advanced her skills within the Auditing industry in managerial roles dedicated to external and internal auditing, business consultation and due diligence. In addition to these roles, she applied her knowledge by arranging and facilitating technical training for article clerks at the different levels of their SAICA traineeship. As a result, she gained expansive experience in the private and public business sectors. Working for a multinational automotive manufacturer was an opportunity to enhance her skills further. Her corporate experience in managerial capacity entailed specialisation in the Treasury function, overseeing local and foreign currency cash management and cash flow forecast management on a national level ensuring compliance with IFRS, SARB, SARS, and SOX.**

# OUR FORDHAM DIARIES



CA(SA)s **MOTHATHE SEWELO** and **VUTHALI KONE** took part in the Fordham University Emerging Financial Markets and Country Risk Analysis course, an intensive 10-week programme designed for international business professionals and current graduates. Both admit that the experience equipped them with skills to view economies through a global, holistic and strategic lens. The course commenced in May, and was hosted online due to the global pandemic.



## **BLACK CHILD, YOUR DREAMS ARE VALID**

"As the year took an unexpected turn due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I remember praying that the 2020 Fordham programme continues — even though it meant that we wouldn't get the full experience by attending classes at their New York City campus. Being chosen to partake in the Fordham programme has been, without a doubt, the highlight of my 2020. The opportunity to learn and acquire new critical thinking skills is one that I didn't take for granted. As someone who works with entities in African regions, I was mostly looking forward to learning more about emerging markets and adding value in my field of work.

Most South African candidates had no idea what virtual learning would entail but were eager to participate, nonetheless. We connected virtually daily, which made distance a non-factor. Our professors were approachable, highly knowledgeable and always willing to assist us. Fordham's teaching style was different from what I was accustomed to — there were no lecture notes, a norm in South African universities. The lectures were interactive, well-presented and lecture recordings were made available regularly.

For our Political Analysis course, we were required to conduct research on our countries of choice and learnt how to analyse political risk as well as its effects on global economies. We all had to prepare presentations on the political risks applicable in our chosen countries, which we presented before the class. This truly enriching experience taught me that political risk is becoming increasingly relevant in business and I believe that every company's risk register should highlight these even more.

We wrote weekly assessments for our Strategic Financial Management course and even though I had done it before, I mostly appreciated its strategic focus. At the end of this course, I felt better equipped to analyse financing decisions from a strategic perspective, rather than just computing numbers. It was intriguing to discover that the world is one big global market, and how one country's economic and political actions affect another's. Our professors' extensive global experience meant that our lectures often involved lengthy discussions on how our learning topics applied to different parts of the world.

Though exciting, this experience wasn't without its challenges. Juggling a day job, homework and virtual lectures — some of which started immediately after work, during working hours or continued into the early hours of the morning — required a big adjustment. On some days, I'd ask to be released from team meetings to attend lectures. Weekends were dedicated to studying for upcoming assessments and research activities. Fortunately, classes were very interactive and most of the content, as well as the practical examples, were often covered in class.

I relish any opportunity to add value and know that all the knowledge gained on this course has honed me into a better professional. This opportunity has also brought me a step closer to my aspirations of being a director or, in a strategic role, in the future. I am grateful to the AWCA for making such opportunities accessible to young Black professionals. As a young girl from the township with an international qualification, this is further proof that a black child's dreams are truly valid and recognised." — **Mothathe Sewelo**



### INSPIRED TO REACH FOR THE SKY

"I must confess that the very first time I heard about Fordham University's Emerging Financial Markets and Country Risk Analysis course, the bulk of my interest lied in finally setting foot on American soil — blame the childhood movies I grew up watching [chuckles]. Upon further research, I was intrigued by the programme's offering and how it would possibly advance my career. When the AWCA distributed the 2020 programme outline earlier this year, I perceived it as a sign that I, indeed, was meant to be a part of the programme. Not only were the course offerings aligned with my career prospects, but they would also help broaden my future skill sets.

I applied, and after what seemed like a long wait, was invited for a gruelling panel interview — which I had adequately prepared for. A few days later, I received a call that added a much-needed spark to my 2020. I'd been accepted into the programme and received a confirmation letter from the AWCA's President Ms Zama Khanyile soon afterwards. I still have a screenshot of the congratulatory email saved because, in my books, it's one of the biggest highlights of the formative years of my career.

Lectures commenced and we were each allowed an opportunity to introduce ourselves. The South African group set up a WhatsApp group as a means of staying in touch and supporting each other. The first leg of the programme kicked off with two courses — with lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6pm to 9pm, as well as Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10pm to 1am. My mind and body always retreated during the last hour between midnight and 01h00 and it also didn't help that winter was at its height in South Africa. To top it off, I was juggling my studies with year-end, meaning long working hours and minimal sleep. Needless to say, coffee and I became best friends. Though I was initially disappointed that we wouldn't be travelling to the US, the intriguing course content more than made up for it.

The professors all had a vast amount of global experience, were approachable and understanding, and created an environment that enabled us to discuss course material openly. My aha moment of this entire programme came during our first exam when a US student asked the lecturer to unpack the exam question for him. I thought to myself, 'In South Africa, the only conversation a student will have with a lecturer during an exam is usually about admin and nothing else'. At that exact moment, I realised that I needed to work harder on my confidence and other soft skills such as speaking up when I don't understand. This was an admirable trait exhibited by most US students on the programme.

My second highlight was discovering new things about my chosen country and presenting my forecast to the class. The course equipped me with the know-how to not, only, focus on the economic and financial aspects when analysing a country, but also take its political and social landscape into consideration. The course also taught me to be globally-orientated in my views as decision-making seldom takes place in silos.

When I informed my dad about the Fordham opportunity earlier this year, the first thing he asked was, "Does this mean you're going to have an international qualification?" It dawned on me, then, that such opportunities were rare. I am eternally grateful to the AWCA for believing in me and selecting me to represent them on this prestigious programme. Moreover, by granting me access to this opportunity, the AWCA has made me believe that I, a young Black female, have the capacity and capability to compete on the world's biggest stages. What I know for sure is that I've walked out of this programme more confident, knowledgeable and inspired to push myself to greater heights." — **Vuthali Kone**

# PREPARING TO TAKE OFF

With a CA(SA) qualification under one's belt, the career options can be as vast and widespread as the ocean. However, things can quickly get overwhelming without proper guidance. Enter the AWCA's Career Lift-Off event... By **Sphumelele Ngubane CA(SA)**



The road to qualifying as a Chartered Accountant is neither easy, nor straightforward. It is fraught with twists and turns embodied by academic stress, the challenges of writing gruelling competence examinations, developing skills in the workplace — all while attempting to contribute to the South African, and global, economy. All this is expected to happen in as little time between undergraduate and postgraduate studies, as well as the three to four years of serving articles. But thanks to the marketability of the designation, our efforts seldom lead to a dead end.

Post qualifying and attaining the coveted CA(SA) suffix arrive the big(ger) questions: What do I want to do now? How do I shape the rest of my career? To stay in audit, or move to commerce? Should I pack up my belongings and head off to an island, rather? Do I want to balance cash flow statements for the rest of my life? It is such questions that highlighted the need for the AWCA to achieve its vision of “Accelerating the advancement of Black Female Chartered Accountants” through an exploration of the vast career paths one can pursue post-articles.

A survey was conducted prior thereto, for the AWCA to better gauge where the gaps were and how such an intervention would assist in providing the necessary practical day-to-day experience

required to answer some of these questions. The feedback from the survey was definite reassurance that there needed to be a platform where trainees could glean direct insights from various practising professionals in the different sectors and industries.

Intending to equip trainee Accountants to make well-informed decisions regarding their next career move, the AWCA held its inaugural Career Lift-Off event on 12 October 2019 at the SAICA offices in Illovo, Sandton. Choosing and building a career is akin to launching a rocket into the atmosphere. Therefore, the Lift-Off concept was befitting, planned with a speedy series of round-robin, fast-paced interactions in multiple ‘industry rooms’. Insert carefully selected groups of professionals from diverse industries in each room and you have a formula for robust engagement and insights gleaned.

Crystallised in the physical form of ‘speed dating’, six boardrooms were set up as these ‘industry rooms’, ranging from academia, technical accounting, the public sector, banking and finance and regulatory/compliance that a Chartered Accountant could explore. In each room, speakers were allocated strict time to interact with trainees and explain their lines of work. Once that time was up, a ‘timekeeper’ rotated attendees to

the next ‘industry room’ until attendees had experiences all industries throughout the day.

What would a career Lift Off be without the participation of the companies crucial to the throughput and retention of qualified professionals? In addition to the speakers, AWCA sponsor organisations Auditor-General South Africa, AWCA Human Capital, National Empowerment Fund and PPS set up exhibition stands and also brought some goodies.

One of the benefits of an AWCA membership, and participation, is the ability to network and engage amongst a broad range of professions. The Career Lift-Off offered attendees the perfect opportunity to connect with speakers and corporate exhibitors. In an exuberating ambience, attendees truly capitalised and ensured they obtained as much information as possible from both the professionals and corporate exhibitors. With this, attendees left armed with a better understanding of the diverse avenues available to a Chartered Accountant post-qualifying. Perhaps packing off to an island could be postponed for a little bit! An immense thank you to the AWCA Professional Development sub-committee and the AWCA office for their tireless efforts in organising this memorable event.

# READY, SET — LET'S GO!

The 2019 APC Preparation Workshop ticked all the right boxes for candidates seeking that last dose of motivation before one of the biggest exams on their journey to becoming Chartered Accountants.

By **Talent Mthiyane CA(SA)**



Some key moments from the 2019 APC preparatory workshop.

**W**hat happens when you combine a team of passionate individuals with a common cause, sponsors willing to lend a helping hand, and candidates who are hungry for success? The result is a jam-packed, enlightening event! The year 2019 marked the 12th anniversary of the AWCA Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) preparatory workshop. The APC is a SAICA examination which assesses professional competence. To be eligible, candidates must have passed the Initial Test of Competence, completed 20 months of a SAICA registered training contract and successfully completed a professional programme. The APC Preparation Workshop has subsequently grown to become one of the AWCA's flagship programmes for candidates seeking that 'last push' before the final hurdle.

In line with the AWCA's second pillar of nurturing young aspiring Chartered Accountants, the APC workshop aims to provide a holistic intervention for the candidates by supplementing academic support with much-needed mental and emotional motivation. These latter two areas, in particular, were identified as the main stumbling blocks in passing this rigorous exam. Adding necessity to this workshop is the declining examination pass rate amongst African candidates in previous years.

The 2019 workshop, in partnership with Rand Merchant Bank (RMB), rallied an impressive turnout of 120 candidates who were inspired by a knowledgeable panel. The AWCA Professional Development sub-committee curated a panel offering a vast amount of insight as both the APT (University of Johannesburg) and UCT Board Course service providers were represented, providing first-hand valuable information on strategy, examination technique and the mindset considerations. Ms Caroline Kgogome, a seasoned SAICA board exam marker with 12 years' experience, marking both the previous QE2 and the revised APC formats, kicked off the session. Kgogome highlighted some of the common mistakes candidates make during the exam, as well as how to prepare for, and approach, it. A candidate, she said, needs to have the right mindset as well as a thorough understanding of concepts and be able to demonstrate their competence in the exam. Ms Tumi Qheya and Mr Lyndsay Maseko represented the UCT and APT board courses respectively. Qheya focused on the candidates' emotional readiness before the exam, dwelling specifically on the importance of eliminating distractions and "protecting one's energy". Maseko, on the other hand, drove home a sobering message about how agility and the ability to think like a professional are key when approaching exams, which cover a range of prac-

tical and real-life scenarios. Mr Robert Zwane, SAICA Executive: National Projects delivered a rousing and energetic message underpinning ethics and accountability throughout the exam process. Some key takeaways from his presentation included the importance of being a competent Chartered Accountant — which is exactly what the APC, as a competence-based exam, aims to achieve. The session concluded with a motivational address from Mr Abu Addae, CEO and CoFounder of LifeCheq, a company that helps individuals organise their finances to align with their life goals. Addae shared some sought-after nuggets on overcoming challenges, setting and achieving goals as well as resilience and developing the capacity to bounce back from challenges. The cherry on top was his segment on financial freedom, a goal most aspire to in our depressed economic climate.

The AWCA would like to extend its deepest gratitude to RMB, whose generosity enabled our organisation to touch more lives and contribute to the development of future African female Chartered Accountants. We would also like to thank the amazing guest speakers for sacrificing their time, the candidates for taking time away from their preparations and trusting us with the process, as well as those involved in organising the event!

# SOAKING IN THE LESSONS

The Initial Test of Competence (ITC) Workshop was hosted earlier this year and received with much gratitude by candidates.

By **Siphumelele Ngubane CA(SA)**



The 2020 ITC Workshop held at Workshop 17 Fire Station in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

I noticed that younger people gave up more easily and would just walk out of an exam they perceived tough, while older people approach issues with far more patience and perseverance. However, in terms of technology, the younger people were one up on us older folks. With the advent of technology, studying and obtaining reference material is far easier these days. Back in the day, we had to queue for a textbook. Today, one just goes online. I also noticed that people were more helpful than when I was younger. You could ask anyone for help and guidance.”

These were the words of Mr Vusi Nkabini, the Accounting profession’s very own living example of perseverance and resilience. After several attempts at SAICA’s initial and final qualifying exams, Nkabini qualified as a Chartered Accountant at 52 (yes, you read correctly)! SAICA’s Initial Test of Competence (ITC) is the gruelling initial exam that assesses candidates’ technical prowess and is usually written by candidates who are fresh from completing their Certificate in the Theory of Accounting (CTA).

Given the worrisome ITC pass rate amongst African candidates in previous years, the AWCA ITC Preparatory Workshop was borne out of a need to provide a tangible add-on to requests for help

and guidance before the exam.

The annual workshop is in no way a substitution for the ITC Board Course programme, given the presence of existing SAICA-approved service providers, whose role is to prepare candidates over a series of contact lectures leading up to the examination usually written in January and June of every year. The AWCA’s intervention rather serves as a valuable supplement to support candidates’ mental readiness before exam day. The workshop balances technical insights, strategy and motivation through a selected panel of speakers intending to ease the anxieties candidates grapple with in the weeks leading up to the big day.

The AWCA held its annual ITC Preparatory Workshop on 18 January 2020, at Workshop 17 Fire Station in Rosebank, a cosy venue graciously provided by LifeCheq. LifeCheq is a service provider that helps individuals align their finances and life goals. The MC, Ms Talent Mthiyane, kept the audience engaged with thought-provoking questions and ensured the programme ran smoothly. After kicking off with the foundational overview of the AWCA’s three-tier strategy presented by the AWCA Professional Development sub-committee’s Ms Tumi Mkgoko, UJ Department of Accountancy Senior Lecturer Ms Karabo Kekana shared invaluable tips on exam preparation and

technique. In an exam once famous for its historically disappointing pass rates, it is crucial to, therefore, view the exam through the lens of an ITC exam marker. SAICA marker Ms Nkabaneng Mashile shared an illuminating perspective, outlining the essentials candidates needed to master to pass the ITC exam. Attendees were also treated to reflections by Ms Nokubonga Radebe, who shared her 2019 personal ITC preparation journey. Looking to the future from a foundation built on technical competence and eventual career progression, the CEO of LifeCheq Mr Abu Addae illustrated the various levels of financial freedom that exist throughout adulthood. The cherry on top was a fun LifeCheq sponsored quiz that was accompanied by a beautiful pamper voucher for one lucky attendee. Attendees were treated to a scrumptious lunch from Birk courtesy of LifeCheq.

The effort invested in organising yet another successful annual ITC Preparatory Workshop was no mean feat. A heartfelt thank you goes to the Professional Development sub-committee, the AWCA office and LifeCheq for such a labour of love. In successfully leveraging the power of asking for help and guidance through such interventions, the AWCA is able to achieve its vision of “Accelerating the advancement of Black Female Chartered Accountants”.



W I P H O L D

*An African woman is the mother of the land and the people; the curator of culture and society.*

*She plays the key role in the social welfare of all the people, especially the children who are the future.*

# WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT



AWCA Deputy President **BUHLE HANISE** and Head of Strategic Alliances **THINA TEMBANI** humbly urge all who believe in moving South Africa forward to dig deep into their pockets to support the AWCA's initiatives.

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has had a dire impact on the AWCA's 2020 fundraising targets. Ours is a membership-based non-profit organisation that relies on membership fees paid by individual members, corporates and other strategic partners to keep our lights on as well as fund our initiatives. The annual AWCA Woman of Substance Fundraising Banquet ensures that we raise enough funding to allow a new cohort of women to obtain bursaries for their post-graduate studies. However, social distancing regulations saw this flagship event being cancelled. The balance sheets of many corporations have been materially impacted, resulting in the funding usually raised through corporate memberships being historically low.

## 2020 INITIATIVES

We believe that the AWCA is still very relevant, even in the current context, and that there are plenty alignment opportunities. Ensuring that our bursary recipients and Student Chapters receive adequate support from the organisation remains a key strategic focus. The pandemic introduced many challenges for students and we, therefore, took it upon ourselves to support them through the provision of laptops, data and other supplies. Through the *Back-A-Buddy* campaign, which we launched on a crowdfunding platform in April this year, individuals and corporates can make donations that will go towards ensuring that our students are provided for during this period. We are grateful to all those who have already donated to this campaign – both monetarily and in kind. We also have the *Adopt A Student* campaign for those who would like to make direct contributions to beneficiaries. [See donation

*details in the sidebar section]*

## FORMS OF DONATIONS

We would like organisations to consider us a strategic partner of choice, particularly when it comes to the empowerment of their black female CA(SA)s. Ensuring that the AWCA is funded means that we are able to continue curating impactful initiatives from which organisations and their staff can benefit. Signing up as a member means that we are able to continue doing this. Due to the cancellation of the Woman of Substance Fundraising Banquet, we humbly request that those corporations who had budgeted spend for this event continue to provide financial support to ensure that our initiatives and operations continue to be funded.

There are many commercial benefits that corporations stand to gain from funding the AWCA. Given that the beneficiaries of our programmes are largely black women youth, we are able to support companies to boost their B-BBEE credentials – depending on where the funding is channelled. We also offer a S18A certificate for any donations made to our NPC and this can be requested through our office post a donation or membership being paid.

## WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

Any funding received by the organisation is channelled in three directions:

- Firstly, the premise upon which the organisation was established was to support young black women who aspire to attain the CA(SA) qualification. We therefore offer

financial support in the form of bursaries through the AWCA Bursary Fund to CTA/ Honours/Post-graduate students. This, we found, was where a significant gap existed.

- Secondly, we run various initiatives and events to support the growth and development of our members at various professional tiers. Our initiatives cut across women who are still aspiring to enter into the profession (Identify Tier), to those who occupy entry level roles post qualification (Nurture Tier) and finally those who occupy middle to senior management roles and entrepreneurs (Lead Tier).
- Lastly, our initiatives would not be possible without the support of our operations team who ensure that everything we do is executed seamlessly.



We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to those funders and stakeholders who continue to walk this journey of meaningful impact with the AWCA. Your support is appreciated and will go a long way in ensuring that more women are able to benefit from our initiatives.

## FOR MORE INFO

Want to contribute to the Back-A-Buddy campaign? Visit the link below to make your donation: <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/awca-bursary-fund>

To find out more about the Adopt A Student campaign, and how to get in contact with a beneficiary, kindly contact our Operations Manager Zea Zama at [talent@awca.co.za](mailto:talent@awca.co.za)

## Membership Packages

<b>CORPORATE</b>	<b>R75 000</b>
<b>CORE</b>	<b>R1 200</b>
<b>TRAINEE</b>	<b>R600</b>
<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>R100</b>

Send your registration or renewal queries to [membership@awca.co.za](mailto:membership@awca.co.za)

# CRISIS...A NECESSARY CATALYST



Entrepreneurship and pivoting go hand in glove — this was the key takeaway of the virtual Entrepreneurs Forum held on 11 June 2020.

By **Fatima Mamod CA(SA)**

**T**he Entrepreneurs Forum was established with the clear aim of engaging the challenges that entrepreneurs face, as well as creating a platform that would help generate solutions. It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has cast significant doubt on the success of various industries and has had far-reaching consequences on an already strained economy. This year's event was led by three accomplished panellists, who all did a stellar task at unpacking the theme 'Change in a Time of Crisis' holistically, by drawing on examples of how big corporations have been adjusting during these unprecedented times.

The panellists — Redshift Co-founder and Director Mmabatho Mokiti, Solidarity Fund Audit and Risk Committee Chairperson Tryphosa Ramano and Innate Investment Solutions CEO Lynette Ntuli — shared timeless food for thought that attendees will draw from for years to come. Gugu Mayisela, AWCA board member and head of the Leadership Academy and Entrepreneurs Forum platforms, facilitated the discussion and managed to get the panellists to bring their most powerful insights to the table.

#### UPSILLING IS THE WAY

Describing how Redshift came into being, and its subsequent evolution during this unprecedented period, Mokiti also mentioned that her forte lies in creating business solutions that help others live their best lives. The current pandemic, she said, highlighted the glaring needs within her community which she took to resolving, instead of passing on the responsibility to someone else. "I'm learning that there is no need to wait for things to be perfect. Just get going and modify as you go along, while ensuring that you solve problems for people," she shared, adding that it's important for entrepreneurs to equip themselves with tech skills that will help enhance their offerings, skills and job delivery. "Upskilling yourself and your business is one way to change in a time of crisis," said Mokiti.

#### DIGITISATION

Ramano, a past AWCA President, shared many pearls of wisdom, proving why such discussions are necessary. Every crisis presents an opportunity, she said, and that is the power of perspective. "Did you know that Vicks was born out of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic? Without this crisis, this product wouldn't exist," she reiterated. Now, what can we as entrepreneurs create to solve

the problems brought to the fore by the current health crisis? In addition to this question, Ramano also posed the questions, "Do we need to be in offices? What will this pandemic mean for the future of work as we know it? What are we doing to shape this new normal?"

In conclusion, the former PPC CFO touched on whether boards are engaging enough in digitisation and if they have enough tech-enabled members that understand how technology is shaping future economies. "These are the questions we should be asking on the Boards we sit on and represent. For those of us who have these tech skills, bring them to the table and promote them through your networks and organisations," she said.

#### HUMAN TOUCH

Ntuli focused on how the current pandemic has been the catalyst that got us talking about shared values, ideas as well as how to support each other and grow the business ecosystem. Another key pointer highlighted by Ntuli was that economies are built by people, not artificial intelligence. "Humans form the backbone of economies and the pandemic has highlighted this even more," she concluded.



# LEADERSHIP PERSONIFIED

Sindi Mabaso-Koyana, an entrepreneur and recipient of the inaugural AWCA Lifetime Achievement Award, is committed to paying it forward. It's a persistent task, but one that she's happy to tackle with a smile. By

## KEMONG MOPEDI

It's somewhat of an open secret that renowned Chartered Accountant and Chairperson of AWCA Investment Holdings (AIH) Sindi Mabaso-Koyana – or Sis' Sindi as the AWCA's members affectionately refer to her – loves the AWCA just as much as she loves her two children. The AWCA's sustainability and growth are foremost on her agenda, a dedication that she attributes to her passion of sending the elevator down to bring others to the top. To further confirm her belief in uplifting others, she casually intersperses the Bible verse "To whom much is given, much will be required" throughout the interview. A co-founder and past AWCA President between 2004 and 2008, and now a member of the organisation's Advisory Board, Mabaso-Koyana's affiliation with the AWCA sees her actively seek opportunities that will ensure its growth for decades to come.

True to the adage, 'charity begins at home', the AWCA's leadership thought it befitting to honour Mabaso-Koyana's contribution with an inaugural Lifetime Achiever Award, as part of the annual Recognition Awards. The announcement was made at the annual AWCA Conference hosted virtually, on Saturday August 8<sup>th</sup>, this year. An accolade of this nature usually connotes that one's at the end of a lifelong chapter – which is far from the case for Mabaso-Koyana. "I certainly hope that this is not the AWCA leadership's way of saying 'thank you very much, we don't need your services anymore' because I ain't going nowhere," she quips in a mock American accent, adding that there never will be a time when she isn't living, eating or breathing the AWCA. "The AWCA is deeply ingrained in my life and career. Having grown up under very difficult circumstances and realising how many big breaks I received along the way, and how I could have easily fallen on the wrong side of life, has conscientised me to always be attentive when observing or listening to someone else's journey of development. Sometimes, all people need is a little nudge in the right direction in order to make it," she enthuses.

AWCA President Zama Khanyile sings Mabaso-Koyana's praises, describing her as one of South Africa's most phenomenal leaders and one who fully embodies the AWCA's ethos of 'Develop as you Lead'. "Sis' Sindi has worked tirelessly to elevate the awareness of the CA profession, is a role model to many and continues to uplift others within and outside the AWCA. She has lent herself to the public sector on many occasions – through the various roles that she occupied – where she helped strengthen some of the state-owned entities that she worked with," she says.

**How do you feel about being granted the 2020 Lifetime Achiever Award?** The AWCA, for me, serves as a platform for institutionalising my passion for paying it forward. I see the Lifetime Achievement Award as being gifted something that's meant to reenergise me and further motivate me to give back. In all fairness, the past 18 years of the AWCA haven't been just about me. I attribute this award to the other co-founders Zodwa Manashe, Tshidi Mokgabudi and Sindi Zilwa. We were inspired to establish the AWCA by Mam' Zanele Mbeki. Upon hearing about this award, Mam' Mbeki sent me a congratulatory message in which she also reminded me, 'Sindi you are still young. Don't view this award as your retirement from the AWCA!' I always punt the AWCA whenever opportunities to do so present themselves. I've just been appointed on the International Advisory Board of the Antwerp Management School in Belgium. From glancing some of their academic offerings, I've offered to co-design and pilot some of their leadership programmes in partnership with the AWCA, so as to help develop more professionals. I consider myself part of the furniture at the AWCA and most accolades that we have handed out in the past have been to external people who, in their

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"Receiving the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award is humbling and comes at a time when I am working on a part of myself that used to find it difficult to receive."

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various ways, contribute to our core mission of developing as we lead. Receiving this award is humbling and comes at a time when I am working on a part of myself that used to find it difficult to receive. I'm grateful and, therefore, accept it with open arms.

**How do you balance your career pursuits with your passion for uplifting others? In reality, what's it like to wear many career hats?** My career pursuits are always underpinned by the AWCA. I run and lead AIH, which is linked to the AWCA and allows my work to be intertwined with my passion. AIH is a legacy business that will outlive us and has the AWCA as a beneficiary of its investment returns. Secondly, my passion for the public sector has been driven by a sense of national service for our country. I truly believe that we are at our happiest when our work is aligned with what we hold dear to our hearts.

**Given a chance to have a conversation with**

**your teenage self, what would you tell her?**

That things are going to turn out just fine and that I don't have to fight every battle. As a young Black woman at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I felt the need to always fight for my space and recognition. By the way, I always remind people that at 16, I was a first year student navigating a university environment that was predominantly White and hostile to Black students. I was one of three Black students in our faculty, and one of few pursuing the CA route in our accounting class. As a result, it was quite tough and almost as though we were non-existent. In hindsight, instead of being sensitive about everything, and constantly succumbing to the urge to fight, I could've used some of the people as allies.

**What led to you matriculating at 15?** I started school quite early because my mom had no one to leave me with when she went to work. I'd tag along when my brother went to school and come end of the year, would demand a school report. Luckily, the teacher also felt that I deserved one because I always participated better than some of the age-appropriate children.

**Looking at the AWCA's achievements to date, what are you most proud of?** I am proud of the Woman of Substance Fundraising Banquet, the annual flagship event where the donations are channelled towards the AWCA's Bursary Fund. Our first Woman of Substance in 2005 was the late mam' Stella Sigcau, one of the first female government ministers under our new democracy. I'm glad that we recognised her just a few months shy of her passing. The Duke Corporate Education Board Programme where we prepare female CA(SA)s for board positions is another key highlight. I was on a leadership programme with the CEO of Duke CE where we were challenged to start a tangible project of impact that would live outside of the programme. Finally, the Entrepreneurship Programme which was devised after realising that most female CA(SA)s were no longer following a linear corporate route, but pursuing entrepreneurship instead. It was important to remain relevant to our members by meeting them at their areas of growth and development.

**You have scores of young women who look up to you for inspiration. Where do you draw yours?**

My spiritual grounding underpins everything I do. I'm fortunate to have been able to fill my own well from the knowledge and tutelage of three women in particular. The first one is Gloria Serobe. When I was appointed Group CFO of Transnet at 31, it was comforting to know that there had been a great Black woman ahead of me who had led successfully. I had to find this

woman and hold on to her helms for inspiration. To date, Sis' Gloria continues to be my mentor and someone I can bounce things off. The second one is Wendy Luhabe. She is a huge advocate for mentorship and I am immensely proud to be one of her mentees. I also resonate with how freely she wears her spirituality on her sleeve – at some point she even formed a prayer circle for professional and businesswomen. The third one is Advocate Thandi Orleyn, the Chairman of BP who was recently appointed Chairman of Impala Platinum. I had the privilege of learning and serving on the Toyota board with her, for the last nine years, and on Zenex as well, which is an education foundation. The common thread among these three women is that family values underpin what they do, they are well-grounded and embrace their femininity in all their leadership roles. They are no-nonsense women, as well, by the way. And I am eternally grateful to be under their tutelage.

**SIDENOTES**

**What philosophy do you swear by?** I believe that being able to manage and lead myself, effectively, before wanting to lead others is absolutely important. Naturally, people prefer being led by someone who walks the talk.

**What's the one thing you would ask if you were to meet a wish-granting genie?** An equal South Africa where all citizens respect one another irrespective of race or gender.

**What do you always prioritise in your life?** My spirituality, family and wellness.

**What are some of the things you would hate to miss out on?** Any of my two children's milestones – be they challenging or celebratory.

**What's the biggest misconception about you?** Mine is one that most women face. By being beautiful, fun-loving and energetic people underestimate my spirituality as well as how seriously I take myself and my work.

**What are you currently reading?** My family always laughs at how I'm always in between books – depending on what mode I'm in [chuckles]. I'm reading *Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think* by Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler. It's a book that I usually reference when preparing for leadership talks. Not only does it talk about innovative opportunities that lie ahead of mankind and how we are a growing generation with many mouths to feed and nurture, but its key theme is around the spirit of abundance and how we shouldn't dwell on the spirit of scarcity that says, "*I must take as much as I can now because I'm not certain whether there will be something tomorrow!*" The more we embrace the spirit of abundance, the more we are willing to share amongst one another. This is a message that resonates very well with me.

**What's your biggest pet peeve?** Negative people and those who always find something horrible to say about others.

**When are you at your happiest?** Seeing the impact that I have had on younger people fulfils me.

Mabaso-Koyana's tireless efforts to uplift others and elevate the awareness of the CA profession certainly haven't gone unnoticed. The AWCA's hope is for many other professionals to take a leaf out of her book and continue replicating her good deeds. We salute you Sis' Sindi!





## *AIH Launches Private Equity Fund*

AWCA Investment Holdings (AIH) launches a Private Equity Fund in partnership with the Motor Industry Retirement Funds. The Fund is a generic Fund targeting strategic sectors of growth. AIH is a Black female owned and managed investment holdings company created in 2008.

AIH has since inception invested and built a diversified portfolio across strategic sectors of the South African economy such as Financial Services, Industrials and Technology amongst others. Its current portfolio includes Reef Tankers (Pty) Ltd, Hollard Group, Atos South Africa, AWCA Human Capital (Pty) Ltd and Atlas Automotive Services.

This positions AIH as an ideal investment partner that supports the advancement of African women and represents a compelling value proposition for investment partners.

Private Equity Fund Partners	Legal Advisors	LP Investment Advisor	Corporate Advisors
 <p><b>MRF</b> MOTOR INDUSTRY RETIREMENT FUNDS</p> <p>Retirement funds that deliver</p>	 <p><b>Deloitte.</b></p>	 <p>RISCURA</p>	 <p>NATIONS CAPITAL ADVISORS</p>



RECOGNITION AWARDS WINNERS

# BASKING IN EXCELLENCE



We celebrate the 2020 AWCA Recognition Awards recipients —  
dynamic and inspiring leaders  
who have added to our ever-growing pool  
of motivation!



## AUDIT PARTNER OF THE YEAR

### JOLENE PIERCE: Audit Director, KPMG South Africa

**What is the role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape?** Chartered Accountants understand the interplay between various aspects of business — be it technology, people, finances, operations — and how each aspect influences the others in resetting the strategic outlook of the organisation. This becomes, even, more pertinent in times of crises. It's at times like these where leadership is truly tested, and people look to their leaders to be honest and map out alternatives of how the storm will be weathered to propel the organisation forward. All of this must be underpinned by integrity in the choices leaders make.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?** Prior to the pandemic, digital transformation, cost optimisation and disruptive technologies were some of the challenges businesses were grappling with. COVID-19 has accelerated these shifts in businesses, but now in tougher economic conditions where the recovery of many is uncertain. This is, even, more evident in South Africa where much needs to be done to move the country forward. In light of this, balancing the expectations of various stakeholders while protecting jobs, is probably the biggest societal responsibility faced by leaders.

**What sustains your mental health?** Above all is my belief in a Higher Power who directs my life journey. This is fundamental to who I am and how I conquer challenges. Whether exercising together, baking or watching a movie, time spent with my husband and two kids feeds my soul.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** My grandmother, mother and aunt did not have the opportunities I had, yet they taught me that independence, education and hard work would help me rise above circumstances. I've also had mentors who guided me through my career and made me realise how important little steps are to the bigger picture. They've opened doors for me to learn and served as my anchors as I navigated new leadership roles.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year-old self, what would it say?** *"As you rise, take others with you. Women need role models who have lived through the day-to-day challenges of being a professional in an environment where the rules have been set by the majority!"*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** Through challenge comes strength, clarity and action. No one knows this better than KPMG employees who, through the company's toughest times, committed to stay and contribute to our journey of being the most 'trusted and trustworthy' audit firm. These challenging times will accelerate the change we desperately need to take our country forward.



## TAX PARTNER OF THE YEAR

### ZOHRA DE VILLIERS: Tax Director, KPMG South Africa

**What do you believe is the role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape?** CA(SA)s should use their current positions, whether in big corporations or small businesses, to continue with economic activity as far as they possibly can. It

is clear that South Africa cannot afford to have its economic activities come to a complete halt. With the increase in the budget deficit resulting from reduced economic activity, and employers instituting pay cuts and/or retrenchments, our economy needs to continue ticking and requires a boost to stimulate job creation.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?** With talks of the current circumstances most likely staying with us for the next few years, leaders have to act on the current information knowing that circumstances may change at any moment. This is a scary reality. Companies that are able to adapt quickly have the greatest chance of surviving the impact of the pandemic. If one industry or big corporate cannot survive the impact of the pandemic, it has a knock-on effect on the entire economic ecosystem of our country — from the loss of jobs to a reduction in tax collection.

**What sustains your mental health?** Remote working has made my house an office, and distinguishing between work and my personal time has become a big challenge. I'm learning that it is important to take time out for myself from time to time. I get up early in the mornings to reflect and plan for the day ahead. Of course the plans don't always work out as expected, but I'm usually prepared for the interruptions. I often also go for a walk in the afternoons. Our neighbourhood is vibrant and lively — from vegetable stalls on the corners to car washes along my walking route — all complying with COVID-19 health and safety protocols. This gives me a sense of community, which can easily be forgotten if you are in your home the entire day.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** My mother — she always reminded me to work hard and give my best in everything I do. She encouraged me to dream big and not be defined by circumstances, which has been a huge motivating factor. She taught me to always take care of those around me and treat people fairly. She also, always, reminded me that one could be in a position of power today, but the very people you were leading could rise above you the next day.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year-old self, what would it say?** *"Don't be so hard on yourself because everything works out in the end. You are allowed to make mistakes — just get up and try again. The things you consider important and think will define your life become a distant memory eventually, and no one will remember them. Sleep more, it is pertinent to your overall well-being as you grow older."*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** People and what we are capable of when we put our minds and hearts into something. People are rallying behind philanthropic projects to make a difference in the everyday lives of various communities. South Africans give me hope that we will overcome whatever challenges we face.



## CFO OF THE YEAR: NON-PRI- VATE SECTOR CATEGORY

### NOLWAZI MAMORARE: Chief Financial Officer, University of Johannesburg

**What do you believe is a role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape?** Over and above ensuring that our economy survives this pandemic, we need to drive the importance of sustainable business practices. This pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of not only chasing short term profitability and gratification, but that of doing business with long term sustainability in mind and the interest of our communities at the heart of everything.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?** The lack of courage to make those unpopular, yet necessary, decisions that will help us safeguard the future of generations to come.

**What sustains your mental health?** Time with family and friends energises me, both emotionally and mentally, even if it's just a phone call. I also find reading great fictional comedy books a comfortable escape.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** I cannot single out any one person as many people have contributed towards my growth and achievements – from family, friends, colleagues and strangers. I can only thank God for placing them in my path. What I can acknowledge, without a doubt, is that every opportunity I have had did not just fall on my lap, someone opened a door for me. It is for this reason that I feel strongly about doing the same for others whenever I can.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year-oldself, what would it say?** *“Resilience and pursuing your dreams will pay off – but be kinder to yourself and remember that you don't have to figure it all out at once”. I still have to remind myself of the latter part daily!*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** The world has survived bigger pandemics in the past, and I firmly believe that despite all the uncertainties we face, this too shall pass. The losses will be immeasurable, but there are numerous opportunities presented to us to reset the button and relook our practices, habits and conduct for the better. We shouldn't let these opportunities go to waste.



## TRAILBLAZER IN ACADEMIA

### SIPHELELE KHOMO: Senior Lecturer, University of Zululand

**What do you believe is a role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape?** It is to exercise extra caution in carrying out our duties in the different positions that we hold. These are desperate times where people want to make a quick buck, and some are about to be unemployed. History has taught us to be more vigilant during these times as crime and corruption are usually on the rise. We must remain ethical leaders, support our government and where we can, vigorously influence decision-makers to contribute to the social discourse of our country.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?** The main challenge is devising plans that will balance the needs of different stakeholders, abuse of power and corruption.

**What sustains your mental health?** Reading and listening to positive stories – and making an effort to look for anything uplifting in the midst of a dark chapter.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** My aunt; she has lost four children but doesn't dwell on it. Instead, she continues living and smiling. She has taught me to embrace life and stop worrying about the things I have no control over.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year old self, what would you say?** *“I'm very proud of you. You*

*are doing great and continue focusing on your studies – you are almost done with your first degree!”*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** The fact that God will see us through whatever challenge we face.



## PUBLIC SECTOR LEADER OF THE YEAR

### TSAKANI MALULEKE: Deputy Auditor General and CEO, Of- fice of the Auditor General

**What do you believe is the role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape?** Here, in South Africa and elsewhere, we are confronted with the reality of the effects of unsustainable levels of inequality, growing unemployment and poverty. The pandemic has also highlighted the urgency of investing in infrastructure to deliver basic services, especially in health services, education, housing, water and sanitation and transportation. The investments required for our country to meet its aspirations for economic and social progress are possible if the country is able to attract and retain investment capital from different sources across the world. With technological advances in the modern economy, capital allocation decisions are made and executed quickly. These decisions are made on the basis of information that is relevant, timely, credible, reliable. In this context, the role of professional Accountants and Auditors has become even more important. In order to fulfil their role as trusted partners in the ecosystems that make it possible for citizens' aspirations to be met, CA(SA)s must not only demonstrate technical competence and ethical conduct, they must also enjoy the trust and credibility that comes with being professionals who are attuned to society's needs.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?**

Leaders across government, business and society are being tested as they make difficult choices on how to effectively balance the need to protect lives and livelihoods. This moment calls for competent and empathetic leaders who think more broadly about the impact of their choices on others, their community and the environment. In addition to the above, they must communicate effectively and with honesty.

**What sustains your mental health?** A walk or run where I get to enjoy some solitude, sun and fresh air, as well as time and food shared with my daughters, mom and siblings.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** My first born daughter who is now 17 years old. When I first laid my eyes on her, I became very clear about what love, duty and responsibility meant.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year-old self, what would it say?** *"You keep searching, which is fine. Don't be so anxious about finding your purpose – it will come! You really are way more capable than you think."*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** I have observed how leaders from different countries have approached the complexity of managing the pandemic so that both lives and livelihoods are protected. Countries that have done particularly well, such as Germany and New Zealand, are those that are led by females. I place my hope in this brand of leadership as it will see humanity not only survive this global crisis, but emerge with better social compacts that vastly improve the prospects of a more just and equal society.



## LEADING CORPORATE SECTOR EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

**MARIAM CASSIM: Chief Executive Officer, Vodacom Financial and Digital Services**

**What is the role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic**

**landscape?** One of my biggest personal concerns is the impact of COVID-19 on individual lives – from an emotional and financial perspective. It is an inherently stressful time. In terms of the broader economic landscape, my hope is that we can innovate and evolve to the changing environment quickly. I think the success of any business during this pandemic is not only the speed and agility to respond to change, but also the ability to identify new opportunities and to continue to remain relevant – especially as the world moves quicker to adopt digital solutions.

**What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing leaders during this global pandemic?**

The pandemic has demonstrated that the least disrupted organisations during this time are those at the forefront of digitisation – both from a product and services point of view, thus enabling remote working to run smoothly and swiftly. So, more focus on digital technology is definitely the way to get your business future fit. It is vital for leaders across various industries to ensure that they have a strong digital presence and footprint. I also hope that we have become more aware of each other's struggles as human beings and that the decisions taken going forward will be holistic and cognisant of the overall human, social and environmental impact. This is essential in building a sustainable future.

**What sustains your mental health?** First and foremost, it is about loving what I do and looking forward to waking up every morning knowing that I am making a true difference in the lives of my customers, as well as those that I lead. I am extremely fortunate that my current job affords me just that. I really strive to take some of my personal values into the workplace – I think having synergy across your core values, ethics and beliefs and those that you promote in the workplace is important for positive mental health. I am also hugely fulfilled as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, mentor and friend, and thoroughly enjoy the time I spend with those near and dear to me.

**Who is the one person who has changed your life for the better?** My late dad. He gave me the freedom to be confident from a very young age, even if it meant speaking up against my two older brothers. Even though I was a girl, he ensured that I was afforded the exact same opportunities that my brothers had – something which isn't always common in traditional families. This gave me the confidence and self-belief to be anything I'd always dreamt of being, so long as it met just one criteria from my dad – to always use the gift of intelligence that I have been blessed with to improve the lives of those around me. These are the same values and attributes that I have already begun instilling in my 3-year-old daughter. I believe that this is necessary in creating the next generation of strong female leaders, while also encouraging them to maintain their femininity.

**If you could send a note to your 21-year-old self, what would it say?** *"Map out where you would like to go and the impact that you would like to have along that journey – but don't be constrained by one specific route to get there. As a female in the workplace, it can be extremely challenging to have your voice heard but leverage your unique strengths and abilities – conformity to norms isn't necessary. Instead, creating your own norms will help you shine and operate at your best."*

**What has consistently given you hope during these challenging times?** The fact that this is probably the most exciting time to be alive. Innovation and creativity are at their highest levels ever and therein lies the opportunity to make an impact. Secondly, the power of what is possible when people, organisations and governments unite gives me immense hope. I have been both enthused and humbled by the many heroic acts of kindness and generosity throughout this pandemic – and that inspires me to look forward to a better future.





**Mmabatho Hantise, Power Tea Sub-Committee**

“Mmabatho has been an active and reliable member of the Power Tea sub-committee for a few years now – a task she didn’t compromise on, even, during her MBA studies. During this time, Mmabatho was the driving force behind the sub-committee and always put her hand up for extra responsibilities such as meeting with sponsors and attending to other stakeholder matters. Of notable mention is that she took on these responsibilities out of her own volition, thus showcasing her commitment to the sub-committee and the organisation as a whole.”

**Nominated by Phetogo Mabaso**



We cast a spotlight on these remarkable AWCA members whose selfless efforts continue to grow our organisation in leaps and bounds!



**Riasha Seeparsad, Secretariat and Finance Portfolio**

“Riasha was recruited into the committee at a time when it was very lean on resources. Her great attitude and positive mindset have seen her tackle tasks with much diligence. Riasha’s role is key in setting up meetings, taking minutes and holding attendees accountable for action items, which in turn has enabled the Committee to deliver on commitments made during our gatherings. She is instrumental in the planning of events from a financial perspective, keeps our financial records up-to-date and engages early enough when there are issues. Riasha also integrated herself into the National Finance structure, easily, which immediately made her effective in her role.” **Nominated by Nonkululeko Sigudu**



**Siphumelele Ngubane, Professional Development**

“Since joining, Siphumelele has contributed significantly to the success of events such as the *Career Lift Off* (2019), *APC Workshop* (2019), and the *ITC Workshop* hosted in January 2020. Siphumelele provided thoughtful and fresh ideas, which steered the sub-committee further into delivering value-adding events to the AWCA’s target audience. Most impressively, her knowledge of the AWCA brand stands out, as she always recommends reputable speakers and facilitators for the AWCA’s events. By actively marketing AWCA events and news, in and out of her networks, she has proven herself a worthy ambassador of the organisation.” **Nominated by Tumi Mokgoko**



**Ropfiwa Sithubi, AWCA Western Cape**

“Ropfiwa is the longest-serving member of the AWCA Western Cape branch – seven years to be exact! She’s been active, visible and supported me greatly in heading up the portfolio. Over the years, she’s also demonstrated immeasurable commitment and dedication.” **Nominated by Nokukhanya Ngqongwa**



**Lindiwe Masilela, Leadership Academy**

“Lindiwe joined the committee this year and started off supporting various projects. No sooner than having joined did she proactively step in to lead two projects. Firstly, the repositioning of the Duke-AWCA Women Leading Africa Board Leadership Programme. She carried out extensive research to help benchmark the programme content and cost, which then allowed the AWCA to engage more effectively with Duke in repositioning the relationship and the programme. She also contributed immensely to the AWCA Coaching Programme, set to launch in September 2020, through engaging with various coaches on the market and suggesting how best to structure the programme. Lindiwe is reliable, committed and meticulous. Most notably, she takes initiative and implements with confidence and excellence.” **Nominated by Gugu Mayisela**

# THE AWCA ENGAGES THE SOLIDARITY FUND

The interactive webinar held on 3 June 2020, and hosted by our Deputy President Buhle Hanise, was an insightful session that highlighted the little efforts we could all make to contribute to the Solidarity Fund's success.

By VIMBAINASHE MACHEKA



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the establishment of the Solidarity Fund on 23 March 2020. This was a call to all citizens to consolidate efforts in the fight against the pandemic and its effects. To support this initiative, some 'Friends of the AWCA' work pro-bono, together with other citizens in the various structures of the Solidarity Fund. These include Gloria Serobe, 2006 AWCA Woman of Substance recipient as Chairperson of the Solidarity Fund Board, and Tryphosa Ramano, past AWCA President as Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee.

It is against this backdrop that the AWCA was in conversation with the CEO of the Solidarity Fund, Nomkhitha Nqweni. This interactive webinar, held on 3 June 2020 and hosted by our Deputy President Buhle Hanise, was aimed at gaining a better understanding of the Fund's purpose and achievements, as well as find out where we as AWCA members and citizens could lend a helping hand.

The Solidarity Fund is a rapid response vehicle set up to address any COVID-related crises. Rapid response in the sense that the Fund can respond to the crisis with agility and make decisions quicker than government departments would, therefore complementing some of the work done in the public sector.

Below, are the three pillars that form the Fund's key focus areas, as outlined by Nqweni:

## Pillar 1: Health response

- Ensuring that frontline health workers (including community health workers working outside formal public health) have adequate personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Support to ensure availability of ICU beds in hotspot areas;
- Funding the local manufacturing of non-invasive ventilators.

## Pillar 2: Humanitarian efforts

- Distributing food parcels to the needy Fighting Gender-Based Violence (GBV) through supporting facilities that assist vulnerable women and children; especially given that the plight of women and children faced with GBV came to the fore during lockdown.

## Pillar 3: Solidarity in action

- Educating the population on behaviour change; encouraging wearing of masks, washing of hands, social distancing and obeying lockdown regulations. If citizens' behaviours change, then the curve can be flattened resulting in the pandemic having a lower impact on the health system and easing the humanitarian plight.

When asked how we could support the Fund, Nqweni raised several ways in which we can all play our part. These are:

- **Crowdsourcing ideas to create new industries and job opportunities.** The pandemic has caused mass job losses and some businesses to close. New industries will ease the pandemic's economic effects. Actively looking for ideas on repurposing or pivoting a business' capabilities could go a long way.
- **Providing intellectual capacity to the Fund.** Three of the AWCA's members serve on the Fund's Audit and Risk Committee, which will further assist in keeping the Fund accountable.
- **Amplifying our voices and highlighting the areas of need in communities.** This includes preaching, and maintaining, behaviour change as our society learns to co-exist with COVID-19.

- **Bringing forward ideas on how to make the impact of the Fund sustainable.** These are long term ideas that will go beyond just handing out food parcels.
- **Assist in activation of local manufacturing.** Resuscitate industries that had long been struggling, but are now needed.

On the subject of education, Nqweni mentioned that there were initiatives that the Fund had identified to assist in that space. High on their agenda was helping Special Needs Schools with procuring PPE. They had also earmarked PPE for distribution to medical schools throughout South Africa. The Fund had already done food drives to replace the feeding schemes that had shut down as a result of school closures earlier in the year. Through various collaborations, they had influenced service providers to provide zero rated data for education purposes.

Participants raised their concerns around Black-owned businesses being left out in the Solidarity Fund's procurement processes. Nqweni cleared this, explaining that B-BBEE status was a key factor in the procurement process and that some procurement had already been made from Black-owned businesses. She added that other factors considered in their procurement process were price, quality and speed of delivery as there was a need to urgently procure good quality goods at the right prices. The Solidarity Fund uses procurement guidelines from Business for South Africa, a collaboration of South African businesses formed in response to the pandemic.

Overall, it was an enlightening session that helped participants glean some worthy insights from the Solidarity Fund's activities. Hanise reiterated the AWCA's commitment to support the Solidarity Fund's efforts. As Nqweni rightly said, "It is the combined solutions that are going to have the most impact".

# ADVANCING THROUGH THE CHALLENGES

Accountant, academic and social commentator  
**KHAYA SITHOLE** on what it would take to  
build a reimagined South Africa.



**W**hen Neil Lazarus opens the first chapter of his book – *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* – he refers to the elusive phrase of ‘Great Expectations and the Mourning After’. Such a phrase – laden with subliminal subtexts – became an appropriate summary of the story of postcolonial Africa. When Supriya Nair wrote her seminal essay titled *Melancholic Women: The Intellectual Hysterics in Nervous Conditions*, she cited multiple examples of postcolonial fiction that told the story of the expectations associated with the great breakthrough moments of African states being freed from colonisation; and the immediate paralysis that immediately sets in – and lingers on.

### THE GREAT EXPECTATIONS

In the South African context, the great expectations associated with the 1994 breakthrough, have mirrored a similar trajectory as other African states. The indications of the paralysis are pervasive. 25 years after democracy, the assessment of the state of the nation remains as sobering as it is untenable. In its 2019 report on the state of transformation, the Commission for Employment Equity indicates that South Africa’s demographics reflect a society that is 78% Black, 10% Coloured; 9% White and 2,7% Indian. In the same report, the Commission reported that in relation to top management positions, White employees occupied 66,5% of the positions; followed by 15% Africans, 10% Indians and 5% Coloured. When management positions are regarded as a proxy for institutional and economic influence, the position indicates a concentration of power and influence in a small group of citizens premised primarily along racial lines. This is unarguable!

In assessing the state of human development, the Human Sciences Research Council reports that South Africa is ranked 116<sup>th</sup> of the 210 countries surveyed. The index measures countries against each other using variables ranging from life expectancy, education attainment levels and economic indicators. While the data indicates that South Africa still has a long way to go, it is important to dig deeper into the South African report. To achieve this, the report is dissected on a microscopic level to identify whether any of the variables warrant particular attention. And therein lies a haunting summary of the South African dilemma.

As the Black citizens make up the majority of the demographics, their assessment on the same index results in the same ranking of 116. And yet, when White South Africans are tested separately, the results indicate that their human development

index ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the world. This is on par with the national rankings of countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium. The simple explanation behind this is that the quality of life enjoyed by white South Africans is on par with first world standards, while for the remainder of the population, third world conditions prevail.

### THE GREAT PROMISE

The net effect of these variables, is that the great promise of the post-democratic state, has failed to deliver the democratic dividend in a redistributive manner that lifts society at large. Rather, the concentration of wealth has been entrenched and inequalities have widened. The consequence of this reality, is an entrenchment of social fracture points that can only lead to unrest in multiple forms and manifestations. As South Africa mourns the lost opportunity, it is easy to gravitate towards despair and discontent. But the current global pandemic, has offered a rare opportunity for universal introspection.

It is a universally-acknowledged fact that the power of transformational instruments owes a lot of its effectiveness to the robustness of the regulators, and the benevolence of market participants. The Employment Equity Indicators for example, indicate that there has either been a lethargy in regulation or resistance from the various institutions being measured. Whichever corner of the spectrum one ends up in, the glaring reality is that in the absence of a change in momentum, the prevailing dilemmas will haunt us for a while.

In recent times, two events have accelerated the introspection process for most of us. The killing of George Floyd – in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the US, on 25 May this year – highlighted the extent of the fragile nature of race relations across the world. Rather than the incident being confined to merely an American event, the story resonated across the world where the tensions across various parts of society remain as acute as they are unresolved. The fracture points – whether represented by admission rates of Black students at Ivy League universities, the transformation reports submitted by big companies, or the unemployment crisis affecting the Black youth of Khayelitsha and Matatiele – are always one needlepoint away from eruption. The ability to understand and appreciate this, remains at the core of the mission of transformational institutions such as the AWCA. The unique elements making up the social fabric of South Africa, captured by the Human Development Index, differences between the

White and Black members of what ought to be one nation and one society, reinforce the fact that even now at this point in our history, the role and responsibility to exist for meaningful transformational change remains relevant.

### THE RESET BUTTON

The world at large remains firmly in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. Its pervasive effects on societies and economic systems has forced us all to revisit what we thought we knew about the world and our roles in it. For a country like South Africa, gripped by a plethora of self-imposed pandemics – rape, femicide, gender-based violence and fragile social relations – the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted our national breaking points. The obvious implication for all of us in South Africa is that the status quo as it is, simply will not hold. The move towards the new reality – with its new ways of living, working and interacting cannot be allowed to replicate the patterns of the past where those with means consolidate their stronghold at the expense of many. Rather, the reset button that the pandemic has brought, should become the springboard for something more equitable for all citizens.

The multiplicity of socioeconomic challenges that affect the South African society are delineated and amplified across racial and gender lines. Resolving them, requires a multiplicity of efforts and initiatives that are at once innovative and bold. Living in an abnormal society demands abnormal approaches to solutions. The recent creation of the Solidarity Fund indicates the capacity of collaboration and partnership to leverage fragmented resources into effecting substantive impact. The national roadmap towards the elusive state is a national project that is disruptive and constructive in equal measure. It is necessary to disrupt so much of the architecture that has served as an impediment to change in the multiple facets of our society. From the legal system that makes it ever more difficult for a case of gender-based violence to be reported and acted upon, to an economic system that entrenches the power of the incumbents to the detriment of so many, to the social system that reinforces parallels rather than convergences, a disruption is overdue. In the construction of the new state, the courage of the nation to confront its weaknesses is a necessity. The courage to confront what exists may yet turn out to be a painful process of recreation, the alternative however – illustrated by a reluctance to embrace the new realities and dismantle our old paradigms – is a guaranteed race towards the incineration of our society as we know it.



# MORE WOMEN ON BOARDS PLEASE!

Business Engage Association CEO and President of the 30% Club Southern Africa and East Africa **COLLEEN LARSEN** on why our continent is in urgent need of gender-diverse boards.





**T**o say that women are under-represented on company boards and other leadership platforms, across Africa today, would be a grave understatement. Globally, women have been at the receiving end of gender disenfranchisement, discrimination and disparity. The current reality is disheartening given that women account for the majority of Africa's population, and have major influence on more than 70 percent of consumer decisions witnessed across the continent.

#### REPRESENTATION MATTERS

However, here in South Africa, statistics indicate that women are getting more representation on corporate boards when compared to other countries on the continent. While progression in the number of women on South African boards has been quite erratic and the number of female talent has gradually improved in the corporate world, the gains made are rather too small to tip the gender imbalance scale.

According to a recent report, 14.3% of JSE-company directors in 2008 were women; by 2017, women accounted for 20.7%. The number of female directors on JSE-listed companies rose from 540 in 2015 to 598 in 2017. Also worth noting is that most board positions in South African companies are held by CAs. Traditionally, these positions are usually held by men, but the status quo is gradually shifting according to SAICA statistics. Since the start of 2019, there were more female CAs produced than there were male.

#### SOME INROADS

In a bid to improve the listing of more women in top corporate boards, Business Engage established a programme titled the Board MasterClass Series (BMS) aimed at assisting women with their journey into the boardroom. The BMS was created not only to advance women's involvement on South African boards to achieve the 30% aspiration, but to also sensitise the next generation of male directors and improve company bilateral intelligence. BMS is a practical session targeted

at women, but men are also welcome to apply. The programme incorporates the knowledge and technical know-how of some members of the 30% Club and is also complemented by individual experts in varying fields.

The objectives of the BMS are to accelerate board readiness for those with the potential to join senior leadership or board roles within a one to three-year period, create a pool of leaders ready to take on senior leadership or board roles (as and when they become available), provide critical experiences that allow potential board candidates to acquire capability prior to being appointed onto boards and to provide participants with exposure and an understanding of the topics they need to familiarise themselves with when prepar-

**“To say that women are under-represented on company boards, across Africa today, would be a grave understatement.”**

ing for senior leadership or board roles. The BMS combines the ‘practicalisation’ of being a board member (leadership, governance, Companies Act requirements etc.) with the actual skill, experience and business networking required to succeed. We are of the view that being the best candidate for a board is futile if one's profile or skills are not known by top professionals.

#### WHY WE URGENTLY NEED MORE WOMEN ON BOARDS

Gender equity has both moral and economic benefits – or implications if you may. The current situation suggests an inequitable use of human talent. It has been estimated that about \$12 trillion could be added to global gross domestic product by 2025, and up to \$300 billion in Africa

if the gender gap is narrowed. This gap denies Africa the benefit of untapped resources capable of increasing overall prosperity on the continent. Evidence on the link between women directors and profitability is still emerging and mixed, but there are several practical reasons why gender-diverse boards are important.

A gender-diverse board tends to have a positive impact on a company's profits and risk management. Women directors contribute positively to boardroom dynamics, broadening a company's market knowledge and raising its profile. Empirical evidence points to the fact that women directors facilitate bigger philanthropic contributions and corporate social responsibility. Corporate boards with more women also tend to be more ethically oriented.

Moreover, heterogeneity is a core issue in corporate governance and company leadership. The composition of the board and management in particular should reflect the diversity of broader stakeholder groups. The mere appointment of a woman to a board may not be sufficient, with evidence pointing to the fact that it's the number of women appointed that matters. It has been estimated that by 2028, there will be more female graduates than males, and 75% of discretionary spending will be controlled by women. These stats therefore suggest that in the future, the success of a company will depend not only on its ability to serve changing demographics but, also, its ability to attract, retain and promote women as employees.

***The 30% Club is a non-profit organisation that believes gender balance on boards and in senior management not only encourages better leadership and governance, but diversity and inclusion – and further contributes to better all-round board performance, and ultimately increased corporate performance for both companies and their shareholders.***



# THE DIGITAL AGENDA

A collaboration between the different societal stakeholders will be needed to make the 'new normal' a successful reality that benefits all, argues Cisco Africa Senior Director **CHARMAINE HOUVET**.



**T**here's a joke currently swirling around social media about how COVID-19 influenced the digital transformation as we see it today — not the CIOs or CEOs of large companies or government leaders. We were forced to adapt to new digital ways of life at near-lightning speed.

Technology has advanced at a pace where we feel together in one room even though, in reality, we are miles apart. As the world anxiously awaits the release of a COVID-19 vaccine, many of us are exploring and discovering new ways of working, living, and playing. The pandemic has accelerated the trend towards e-commerce — with most consumers getting comfortable, almost

overnight, with the swift move from in-person to online shopping. Employees are juggling competing demands at home whilst striving to remain productive. This is our so-called 'new normal'.

### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The call for social distancing catapulted individuals, governments and organisations into the realm of technology transformation at an exponential rate. Technology companies are making various technologies available to countries and companies globally, enabling employees to remain productive. This has brought home the stark reality, that has always been suggested by technology experts, that every organisation will have to digitise sooner rather than later.

Remote working and learning were an option for "some" pre-COVID-19. A seamless adoption of remote working was displayed by the likes of Silicon Valley firm Cisco, who effortlessly moved close to 750 000 employees from offices and enabled immediate remote working thanks to its collaboration technology. Some organisations like Twitter have stated that remote working may/will indeed be a 'new normal' for their organisation.

These unprecedented times have also demonstrated the importance of staying safe online. We witnessed several unfortunate incidents around online meeting attacks. Former CISCO CEO John Chambers once famously said that "there are only two types of organisations — those that have been hacked and those that don't know it yet!" Many security threats are expanding in scope and seriousness. The onus is therefore upon us, when working from home, to ensure that we are familiar with the types of tools and technologies available — and use those that increase our level of online security. This is an area where governments and businesses need to explore to develop and build the correct capabilities and skills.

### THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

Many futurists and technologists have been arguing that "we are preparing today's students for jobs and careers that don't even exist yet". And it is fair to say that COVID-19 has assisted us in embracing and addressing some of the necessary technical requirements for jobs of the future. We have witnessed an increase in remote working jobs during lockdown. We, therefore, need to accelerate the skills agenda to fill the new jobs that we are envisioning and creating. Reskilling must form an integral part of the digital skills agenda. The question is how seamless was the adoption of the 'new normal' across the continent? There are still many factors that inhibit seamless adoption of remote working, learning, and socialising. The digital divide is now more apparent, a time when we are all extremely reliant on technology. A critical enabler of the digital economy is a stable and reliable infrastructure which ranges from ICT networks to electricity. Meaningful participation by all citizens is required to enable a truly digital economy, yet digital access is currently not equally available to all citizens to enable remote working. Affordability is currently a key constraint for many citizens that want to partake in the digital economy. It is disheart-

ening to join webinars and read chat messages indicating delegates will log off early due to lack of data. Relief is being explored, but not quickly enough. Discussions between the government and the ICT sector, regarding the release of high demand spectrum to address the high costs of ICT services, are currently ongoing. True leadership was displayed during the pandemic when government and industry worked together to assign much-needed high demand spectrum, albeit temporarily, to enable the operators to provide a more dependable and improved quality of service. If we are to effortlessly adapt to the 'new normal' then permanent solutions need to be found to address those challenges that impact remote working.

### HERE TO STAY!

The world of work has experienced a major reset due to the global pandemic. There is a deep sense of fear and uncertainty during these unprecedented times — empathy and trust have

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"Meaningful participation by all is required to enable a truly digital economy, yet digital access is still not equally available to all citizens..."

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become vital currencies. Employees working remotely need resources to be as productive, creative, motivated and secure as possible. There are various schools of thought around remote working post-COVID-19. The 'new normal' could end up being a hybrid model with some people working from home and others at offices. Certain organisations are scrutinising their employees' needs, while some companies have already indicated that they may never return to office work. Twitter and Shopify Inc. are encouraging their employees to work from home forever! It's clear that remote working will be an indelible part of our lives for a long time and that the workplace will rely heavily on technology. However, the 'new normal' cannot just be about technology — the human touch is just as essential. Empathy and staying connected are vital for the overall health and mental wellness of employees.

### MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The pandemic has highlighted that business must embrace digital transformation for remote working to be effective. This is an opportunity for business to partner with government, academia, civil society, associations and a multitude of stakeholders to embrace the digital agenda. The VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) leadership approach is required during these unprecedented times. There is an opportunity for us to reimagine the future and recreate ourselves through collaboration, partnerships, unlearning and relearning. The current global disruption echoes the words of Roman philosopher Seneca who once said, "The Fates guide those who go willingly; those who do not, they drag!"



# LEARNING REIMAGINED

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Rapelang Rabana, founder of microlearning digital platform Rekindle Learning, talks global digital learning trends and why a blended teaching approach is best. By **KEMONG MOPEDI**

## What was the motivation behind Rekindle Learning and what are some of its service offerings?

At Rekindle Learning, our core offering is looking at the best ways to empower people to adapt to the changing world of work, especially given the increase in change, the impact of innovation and, now, the COVID-19 pandemic. Our platform is structured in such a way that companies can provide continuous learning, in a highly interactive and engaging format, on mobile devices or laptops/desktops. Since completing my studies at the University of Cape Town in 2005, I've always been of the view that technology can help us solve critical socioeconomic problems at scale. Learning has always been one of the areas I was interested in but never had the chance to address it in my first start-up. For a while, I pondered on figuring out a sustainable model that would allow us to merge technology with sound learning principles. There is a staggering gap between what people can do and the level at which they are performing – whether at school or in the workplace. So, there's a lot to fix in the coming years.

"The traditional classroom model can't survive the future because it wastes a lot of time for individual learners."

**The advent of COVID-19 came with a gravitation towards digital platforms, be it in education or how companies were forced to pivot. Was the move towards digital learning long overdue in South Africa?** We have seen cutting-edge companies still use very archaic ways to share knowledge and insights with their teams – and not supporting rapid change using adaptive learning tools. In that sense, I think South Africa has been quite delayed in adapting and shifting. Traditional training approaches are still deeply entrenched in workplace cultures and leaders are still mostly interested in putting people in a conference room and ticking boxes – whether employees are in a position to apply

the knowledge or if that return can be tracked against the business' performance is often left to chance. We haven't appreciated how much digital learning can help us link learning activities to business performance. In the same breath, I would caution against assuming that learning must go entirely digital. The best outcomes are achieved by using a blended approach. I don't necessarily believe that schools, or all learning, should solely be online. Digital learning can be used to address aspects such as providing personalised learning paths and feedback, prioritisation of continuous engagements and learning power so people can focus on what's important.

**Globally, what do digital learning trends currently look like?** Some of the most popular trends that I'm seeing around digital learning globally speak to what I mentioned earlier about personalised learning experiences. Digital learning has played a pivotal role in this regard because traditional teaching methods preach into the middle of the classroom – and they can't be too complex because slower learners will feel lost or too slow, either, lest the quick learners be disengaged. The traditional classroom model can't survive the future because it wastes a lot of time for individual learners. I expect that there will be a huge spike in and around personalised learning. The second biggest trend is the use of virtual reality (VR) in creating immersive learning experiences that transport one to a completely different context. In this way, we're able to provide experiential learning without relying on real-life opportunities and projects to deliver it. For example, young people could prepare for a job interview in a VR context and be exposed to multiple types of companies and interview styles before going for their actual interview. The same virtual learning environments could be created for artisans and technical workers in factories instead of their learning being limited to physical workshops and tools available there. Going forward, I think these immersive experiences are going to be crucial, plus the cost of developing VR environments is dropping. There's potential for us to provide a mix of knowledge-based and theoretical learning – which is what we're already doing with experiential learning at Rekindle Learning.

**How important do you think personalised e-learning, or digital learning in general, is?** Organisations and individuals will need to place themselves in a position where they can quickly learn, unlearn and re-learn – a learning growth mindset is needed to do that. At its core, a resilient and adaptable organisation is a learning organisation because you can't move fast if you don't learn fast. Sitting in front of a lecturer isn't always going to be feasible. Going forward, we're going to rely a lot on digital learning tools. Whenever organisations think about becoming adaptive, resilient or responsive, then digital learning tools are going to come out tops.

**Now that we've been forced to fully incorporate ourselves into digital learning, where to from here?** I think that post-COVID we won't necessarily be as stagnant as we've always been about learning. I hope that post-COVID we will have the options to do, both, in-person and digital learning. Now that we've established that both are legitimate options, we should rather look at understanding which aspects of a curriculum are better addressed in-person and which digitally. I mentioned earlier that in some cases, discussions and projects are relevant and in some cases personalised microlearning to grasp the core principles and knowledge is important. We should rather start matching the stages of learning with the tools and mechanisms we have available to learn so we can get to a point where learners attend fewer classes weekly because the other material has been designed for them to cover on their own online.

**With your experience, you could've used your passion for technology in other areas of entrepreneurship. Why did you decide on digital learning specifically?** As an entrepreneur, it's important to align the work that I do with the things that I fundamentally care about. My brain's always wondered how we can capacitate people and get past success being a lottery game. We don't know how to democratise prosperity. In my own family and network, some have made it and some haven't. It's always been a deep curiosity of mine to find ways of closing that gap so that success isn't left to chance to the extent that it is now.

## Tailor-making a brighter future.

Chaz Jojo Ngaka, founder of Kala Lifestyle

Fashion is my passion. I believe that the first conversation you have with the world is through what you are wearing. We design, manufacture and supply fashion wear, corporate apparel and protective clothing. Through partnering with the IDC, we have been able to expand our business and establish an in-house factory. This has led to shorter production lead times and made it possible for us to provide our customers with excellent service. We have been able to create jobs, employing 104 people at full capacity. We're set up for a brighter future – bigger markets and increased market share within SADC and abroad.

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KALA  
LIFE STYLE

FNB's Chief Economist **MAMELLO**

**MATIKINCA-NGWENYA** weighs

in on what further ratings downgrades will mean for South Africa's economic prospects!



## WHAT THE DOWNGRADE?

**P**ost 1994, South Africa experienced successive rating upgrades that pushed the country from below to above investment grade. The country's long-term foreign currency investment-grade status was affirmed by three international ratings agencies in 2000 and further upgrades followed until 2009. These upgrades were supported by a notable expansion in output — our GDP was well above 3% from 1994 to 2011. However, the tide turned in 2012 when all three rating agencies downgraded South Africa — citing weakening institutional strength, reduced fiscal space, a negative investment climate, relatively high labour costs despite high unemployment, and increased concerns about future political stability.

### WHAT TRANSPIRED?

The stage was set, and South Africa's deck of cards came falling. Economic growth has since deteriorated significantly and has been followed by a number of downgrades; the latest wave saw South Africa being rated junk status and falling out of the World Government Bond Index (WGBI). This exit was on the cards for some time as government failed to address the constraints facing the South African economy. Over the past eight years, South Africa's growth outcomes have left much to be desired and the economy has struggled to emerge out of the abyss that we sunk into over the past decade — the growth rate has struggled to rise significantly above 2%. Granted, weaker global growth was a factor but some of the pain — such as the erosion in business and consumer confidence on the back of ongoing political uncertainty, corruption and the decline in South Africa's position in ease of doing business — was self-inflicted.

GDP per capita has been contracting for the past six years. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, rising to 30% in 1Q20, and expectations

are for further weakness in the labour market this year. Inequality in South Africa remains pervasive, with the country recognised as one of the most unequal societies in the world. A report compiled by Statistics South Africa indicates that South Africa's Gini coefficient, currently at 0.65, has made no improvement in the past decade (the Gini ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates perfect equality and 1 indicates perfect inequality). The report notes that "South African inequality appears to be remarkably persistent. Despite many efforts by government to reduce inequality since our democratic transition in 1994, progress has been limited."

While South Africa is recognised as having one of the most progressive tax systems in the world, revenue has largely disappointed on the back of poor economic performance and a deterioration in tax administration. To add insult to injury, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on tax collection — National Treasury forecasts a R304 billion shortfall for the current financial year.

### WHAT NOW?

Government has struggled to contain growth in expenditure over the years, and National Treasury notes that salaries for civil servants have grown by ~40% in real terms over the past decade. Finance Minister Tito Mboweni has highlighted that there is an urgent need to improve the composition of spending and part of this involves reducing the wage bill, which accounts for around 35% of the consolidated budget. While imperative, history tells us this will be a monumental task for government given the strength of labour unions in the country. The precarious state that the government finds itself in was evident in the tabled Supplementary Budget Review, which adjusted for the COVID-19 related tax revenue shortfall as well as the fiscal response to the pandemic.

The budget recognised that the country faces a serious fiscal sustainability problem but failed to provide details on how the government plans to achieve debt stabilisation.

This year's main budget deficit is expected to increase from 6.8% of GDP to 14.6%, before narrowing to around 7% over the medium term in order to help stabilise debt at a now much increased 87.4% of GDP in 2023/24 (or nearly R5 trillion). In 2019/20 gross national debt came to 63.5% of GDP or R3.3 trillion. Debt-service costs are expected to rise from around 15% of main tax revenue in 2019/20 to around 21% in 2020/21. Put differently, interest payments this fiscal year will be more than double the share being spent on capital assets.

The supplementary budget highlights that in the absence of economic reform and if the proposed consolidation measures fail, debt would quickly spiral beyond 140% of GDP — a clear debt crisis scenario. Without a doubt, this would open the door for further rating downgrades that will further increase South Africa's cost of borrowing. While National Treasury has indicated the details on how they plan to embark on fiscal consolidation in October 2020, their track record is unfortunately not comforting.



**Mamello Matikinca-Ngwenya**

# RECONSTRUCTING LIVELIHOODS

## (in a shrinking economy)

Alexander Forbes'  
Chief Economist

**ISAAH MHLANGA**

casts his eye on a new economic dawn that will be required post-COVID.



**W**hat was excitedly coined 'Twenty Plenty' has not lived up to its nickname in a positive way. Everything that we understood as normal – from travel, work, freedom of movement, security of income, the role of government and that of the private sector and basics such as family gatherings over a *seven-colours* Sunday meal – has been turned upside down. We can no longer assume that things will work the way they used to pre-COVID-19.

#### IN REALITY

COVID-19 is first a health crisis that translates into a government-induced supply, which then translates into a demand shock to the economy. The lockdown implied that businesses were closed for good reason, people were out of work and therefore lost their income. With lost income, household consumption declined significantly and poverty levels rose. Those families with a single breadwinner became destitute, which then required government support through outright cash transfers. This is what saving livelihoods was all about!

The dichotomy of saving lives versus livelihoods remains difficult to balance, and will worsen as some of the income support provided through government's Adjusted Budget comes to an end after six months from the launch date. This is why most countries including South Africa, reopened their economies a lot sooner than what was initially expected.

Our economy was in a vegetative state way before COVID-19 hit. The economy had experienced three consecutive quarters of contraction from the third quarter of 2019 to the first quarter of 2020. This was the terminal performance of an economy which grew by an average of 0.8% of the five-year period that ended in 2019. Effectively, livelihoods were being destroyed before COVID-19 as the unemployment rate rose to approximately 31% by the end of the first quarter of 2020.

The second quarter of 2020's economic performance will be the worst in history, with expectations of a contraction of 30% quarter to quarter on an annualised basis. For the year as a whole, economic growth is expected to range between -6% to -16%. The rising liquidity risk we saw from April will gradually transform into higher credit risk, which economists estimate will lead to an increase in company insolvencies and a loss of about 1.7 million jobs over the next year.

#### RECOVERY PROSPECTS

In many instances, the loss of jobs will be permanent as the economy is not expected to recover quickly. If the economy contracts by the SARB and National Treasury's forecasts of roughly 7.0% this year, recovering to about 3.8% in 2021, the economy will not return to 2019 levels until 2023, meaning there would be three years of lost economic growth, and thus the lost jobs will become permanent.

Without a ruthless policy shift that encourages

private business to invest in priority sectors that government identified in the National Treasury discussion document, South Africa might not catch up to its pre-COVID-19 economic trend. Consequently, poverty levels will remain high and incomes low for most of the decade. At this point, self-preservation at all levels of society is key. Households should preserve whatever little cash they have for critical spending on food and health. Corporates are focusing on resilience rather than efficiency and business expansion. Governments are focusing on preserving lives and livelihoods.

#### A NEW DAWN

Post the pandemic, a new economy will be required. One that ensures that inequality is reduced, jobs are created and the quality of life for those at grassroots levels is improved. This would need an active collaboration between government, business, labour and civil society. Professionals such as accountants, engineers, lawyers among others must contribute, in their individual capacity in addition to their corporate roles, to the national discourse that will shape a better country. Economists are debating what needs to be done, social activists are also advocating for the marginalised to be prioritised. Except for a few CA(SA)s that get involved in matters of social importance, where are the rest (that prefer to keep to themselves)? What will be their mark in the new economy? There is no better time to do that than now when everything is under reconstruction, renegotiation and a complete rethink of social structures!

# NOT THAT EASY?



By now, you are probably well on your way to mastering the art of working from home. If not, health and fitness blogger **KGABO MASHALANE** unpacks a few simple ways to do so effectively!

**W**hen working from home — a concept that wasn't as prevalent in South Africa as it is globally — was introduced at the onset of lockdown, in March, most assumed it would be an answer to our work-life balance woes. After all, we wouldn't be commuting in peak-hour traffic and we'd slash the time spent getting ready for work by half.

What we seemed to have forgotten was that successfully working from home isn't without its unique challenges. From keeping productive while managing the children to niggly 'at-home' distractions competing for your attention and endless Zoom and Teams meetings, a day could go by without a single item being ticked off your to-do list. Of course, everyone's situation is unique — and what may work for one person, could be impractical for another. Below are a few lessons to be learnt about working from home:

**SEPARATE YOUR WORKSPACE FROM YOUR LIVING SPACE.** Setting yourself up for success also comes in the form of recreating the environment in which you are most successful. Thus, differentiating workspaces from living spaces is vital when working remotely. Having a consistent

and daily go-to room, desk, or chair helps you associate that place with productivity. Designate the same spot for a few days and watch your mind and family quickly acclimatise to your work mode. Communicate expectations with whoever is homewith you, to minimise distractions.

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"Setting yourself up for success also comes in the form of recreating the environment in which you are most successful."

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**SHOW UP DAILY.** Challenge yourself to get started early à la *Robin Sharma's The 5am Club: Own Your Morning. Elevate Your Life*. Create a morning routine that will set you up for a productive day. Waking up early, before your children, to create a to-do list and getting important items out the way may prove effective. On the contrary, if you are nocturnal, adjust your schedule to accommo-

date late-night productivity. Part of successfully working from home requires setting a schedule and drafting your to-do list ahead of time. On the flip side, one of the hardest things about working remotely is setting time boundaries. Maintain regular working hours and structure your day as you would in the office — pick a definitive starting and finishing time.

**MAINTAIN BALANCE.** Make a daily effort to learn what works and what doesn't. Working from home means that we aren't having impromptu conversations and breaks, so remember to create those whenever possible. Most importantly, don't push your mind and body when signs of fatigue surface.

**ADJUST YOUR WORK HABITS.** Show up and be heard on conference calls. If on a video call, minimise other applications and focus on the conversation, in the same way you would stay engaged in a meeting by putting away your phone or closing your laptop. Practice good conference call etiquette by dialling in early — or at least on time. If anything, remember to create a work schedule that fits snugly into your home life. Here's to working hard but doing it by own rules!



THIS IS  
THE SIGN  
YOU'VE BEEN  
LOOKING FOR

# A PURPOSE UNEARTHED

**TARYN MOODLEY** traded in Chartered Accountancy for career coaching, and discovered her life's purpose in the process. a redirection she says reignited her life purpose.

I got into coaching indirectly during my over 15-year tenure as a Chartered Accountant and finance leader in corporate. I discovered early on in my career that I was passionate about helping and guiding my finance team define and achieve their long-term career aspirations.

## TRANSITIONING

A turning point that propelled me into coaching, and drove me out of corporate, was when I realised how unbalanced my life was. I was struggling as a young mother and going through a divorce — and despite having overcome many obstacles in the corporate world and achieving the level of success I had set out to, my career purpose was still nowhere to be found.

It was at this point that I started my self-awareness journey. I discovered the Professional Business Coaching course around the same time that I completed my MBA. The reward of all the years I spent in difficulty was a redirection back to coaching. Grateful to be connected to my purpose, in 2016, after overcoming my fears and working towards supporting my need for security, I took a leap of faith into entrepreneurship. I moved into financial consulting and coaching — and thus Future Manager Coaching and Activation (FMCA) was born.

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

My coaching mission is straightforward — it's to support financial professionals in overcoming their obstacles, to help them reach positions of influence and to be intentional about changing the diversity of boardrooms and business in all industries, globally. Most importantly, to achieve all of the above from a place of compassion, kindness and caring for all.

This passion was born out of my own challenging personal career journey and having experienced these obstacles firsthand, both as a finance professional and as a woman. I experienced low job satisfaction and motivation, lack of intentional career direction, felt misaligned and under-valued, failed dismally at work-life balance, and not getting the promotions and career growth I deserved. Based on the above, I sought to work with finance professionals in overcoming these obstacles which were all too familiar to me — and given my journey, had allowed me to develop ways to thrive. I was also driven by the need to create a support network for female finance professionals after seeing the limited availability of sponsors and mentors in the workplace. I'd also realised how one's career journey could be accelerated through the support of a coach and mentor when they were available.

## A SOLUTION AWAITS

My coaching programme is three-pronged and is

offered through a supported and guided process. Upon completing the programme, the aim is for participants to have a clear sense of identity and direction, restore confidence and their sense of value, a thorough understanding of their career misalignment, have increased your job-satisfaction, set career visions and goals; have an action-plan to support those goals, and a coach or mentor to empower them while working towards that much-deserved promotion. All these, will ultimately lead to a fulfilling and impactful career.

The three-step approach is broken down into six sessions, all based on identifying and leveraging your unique value proposition and strengths, being supported while searching for practical solutions to your obstacles and envisioning a bright future. It is also results-driven and built around moving participants closer to their defined career dreams while staying true to who they are.

Seeing finance professionals get promoted, changing the diversity of boardrooms and become impactful and caring leaders gives me the greatest joy. And so does seeing them live fulfilled lives where they are able to give back to their families and communities and change the narrative of our country and our future.

**For more information on the programme please visit [www.fmcoaching.com](http://www.fmcoaching.com)**



# MOVE OVER 'Womandla', HERE COMES 'Women(omics)!'!

TV host, strategist and self-professed superwoman **OLWETHU LESHABANE** is passionate about mothers' contribution to what she has coined the 'mom economy'.

A simple Google search of the topic 'Moms during the COVID19 Pandemic' yields headline results such as: '*COVID-19 lockdown hits working mothers harder than fathers*' or '*In the Covid-19 Economy, You Can Have a Kid or a Job. You Can't Have Both!*' or '*Coronavirus Is Killing the Working Mother.*'

## THE PRESSURE OF IT ALL

The above headlines couldn't have best captured the cries of working mothers during this pandemic. In a country with staggering numbers of absent fathers, and even more shocking statistics of how underpaid women are, we (are expected to) take on the primary roles of the 3C's (Cooking, Cleaning and Caring for children in our homes) — which are all roles that come with zero compensation. And we perform the 3C's while pursuing the fine, but near-impossible balance of keeping up with our Careers. That makes it 4C's — Cooking, Cleaning, Caregiving and Careers.

As the economy slowly started to reopen, many women — especially single mothers — were then faced with the difficult decision of returning to their jobs or taking care of their children. Sending children back to school in order to focus on careers and allow teachers — who themselves are majority females — to take over the heavy task of daytime caregiving seemed the only solution. The economic need and demand for women returning to the workforce in times like these puts a lot of strain on many households, especially those with mothers who double up as essential workers.

In South Africa, the economic impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on women as a collective has been multifarious. The overwhelming majority of workers in education, healthcare and social services are women whose workload has become more complex and overwhelming, though still undervalued and underpaid.

## A BYGONE ERA

Pre-COVID-19, women could (thankfully) be compensated for the generally underpaid work they do via platforms such as the home cleaning online service SweepSouth. These platforms, and many others, halting their services during the height of the pandemic meant women and their dependants were affected abjectly. Household chores doubled and there was no SweepSouth to save the day (and moms' sanities). The paid hours worked by women who were once employed plummeted by a huge number when compared to their male counterparts. Industries, such as retail, food services and accommodation, that have a highly informal and temporary workforce have excessive numbers of underpaid women.

The shift to working from home and that of caring for children in the house, has also been heavily weighted towards women. The very women who make up the majority of the workforce in sectors that have faced an onslaught due to COVID-19 and lockdown. Not only have women lost their jobs, they have lost the little income they once had. Needless to say, low-income and lesser-skilled women have bore the brunt of the

pandemic — the same women who are already underpaid and burdened as it is.

It is safe to say that when we look at the savings and investment culture of women and mothers at the moment, we are feeling this urge to protect, take care of and look after our families. We are feeling the overwhelming sense of 'Why do I need to look forward to a lavish future when I retire, rather than to provide for my children and make them comfortable now?'

## THE WOMEN AGENDA

Though the gender pay gap is high, and the lower pay means a decreased ability to purchase necessary supplies, protect our income and access care and additional support to continue working, we need not lose hope right now.

As women and mothers, we need to put our energies and strengths behind the *Womenomics* agenda. This, is an agenda that seeks to see women's economic exclusion at the heart of corporate policies. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe described the *Womenomics* agenda as 'the idea that women's economic advancement will improve the economy as a whole'.

We need to have corporate and government organisations ask themselves if they have been prioritising women. Have the policies not abjectly excluded women from the table? Are the glass ceilings and barriers that women face not then man-made?

# THE GRIP OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**M**y experiences with gender-based violence (GBV) range from recollections of childhood molestation to being physically and emotionally abused in two long-term relationships. I was also raped on two occasions — the first time at gunpoint in my own home; the second, 10 years later when I was drugged with morphine while out with friends. For the purpose of this article, I focus on the two rape incidents.

## WHAT HAVE I LEARNT?

While I cannot speak for all rape survivors, my experiences have taught me to be grateful for being alive. During each one of the traumatic rape incidents, I would get consumed by an overwhelming sense of losing my life. I succumbed to the strong possibility of my death while doing my very best to survive by giving in to my assailants' heinous deeds. On both occasions, my life was in the hands of strangers who had the power over whether I would live or not. The early days of my recovery are a mixed blur of doctors' visits, looks of shock and horror from the police, family and friends. However, one fact prevailed — I was, and am, still alive. To this day, waking up and having control over the things that I do is a big driving force in my life.

I have also learnt the importance of talking about my traumatic experiences because they are a part of who I am. There are very few safe spaces where one can share such without being judged or seen as weak. For example, I feared sharing my experiences at my workplaces because I did not want to be 'vulnerable' or seen to be lesser than my counterparts. Oftentimes when I share with friends or loved ones, I get reactions of shock and pity. GBV is rife in our society and many of us have either experienced it or know someone who has encountered it. Yet, we internalise our experiences and choose to overcome them in isolation. Not every space is a safe zone, but I found it helpful to identify those where I could be vulnerable and reflect on how I felt as a result of what I had experienced. This, I think, helped me dodge the negative emotions each time I would recall my traumas and pushed me to rather focus on reclaiming my power daily.

## THE CATEGORY IS... WISDOM

Any violent act that is inflicted on you is about power and dominance. Therefore, it is important not to allow your perpetrators to own your power. During an attack, you allow the assailant to take your power, fear you may die and never see loved ones again — and that the rape could be your last living experience. Acknowledge that giving up your power momentarily was a survival mechanism and an instinct that set in instantly. Remember that you had to surrender your power in the hope that your life would be spared and there was not much more you could have done. What matters is that you survived, and did not become a mortality statistic nor a hashtag or slogan you will never get to see. There are so many who did not survive to tell their stories. There are so many who lost their lives for being brave enough to say 'No' or, even, attempting to fight.



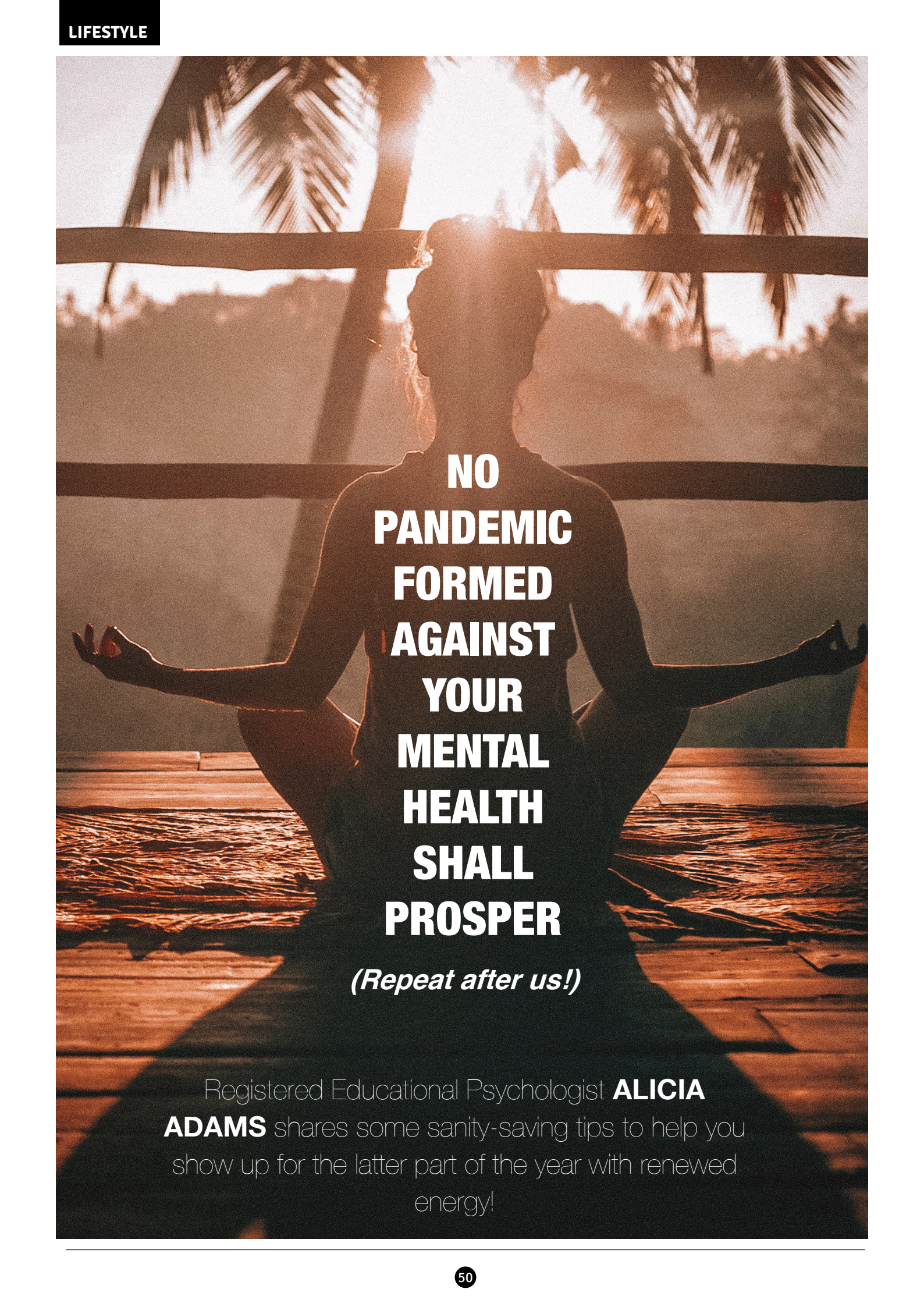
According to Statistics SA's *The Crimes Against Women in South Africa Report*, our femicide rates are five times higher than the global average. Add to that, rape is a stubborn scourge that continuously robs women and children of a chance to enjoy the most basic of human rights — freedom! **TABILE LOQO** opens up about her ordeals!

Often, we tend to dwell on the anger we feel towards the perpetrator and fighting for justice. This is important but could be a hindrance to our healing. The more you focus your energy on your attacker, the more power they still hold over you. Focus on your healing and reclaiming your power and self-love daily.

## A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Being a rape survivor has not changed my life for the better. However, it has affirmed some traits

that I possess — namely, strength, resilience and an undying appreciation for life. Every day is a blessing and I strive to find a corner of happiness, or a smile-worthy moment. I can now stand on my own in situations that would, otherwise, have scared me. I can face adversity knowing that I have been through dire situations and have come out wearing my scars as my stripes. And most importantly, I have chosen to put on my lipstick and make those scars look cute!

A person is shown from behind, sitting in a meditative pose on a wooden deck. The scene is set at sunset, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. Palm trees are visible in the background, and the person's shadow is cast on the deck. The text is overlaid on the person's back.

**NO  
PANDEMIC  
FORMED  
AGAINST  
YOUR  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
SHALL  
PROSPER**

*(Repeat after us!)*

Registered Educational Psychologist **ALICIA ADAMS** shares some sanity-saving tips to help you show up for the latter part of the year with renewed energy!



**Alicia Adams, Educational Psychologist**

Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic reshuffled what we once considered normal and important, but it's also thrust us deep in the abyss of uncertainty and fear. Hands up if your emotions and sense of hope have been all over the place since the onset of lockdown in March!

On the one end of the spectrum, the pandemic has brought with it great loss and devastation, but on the other it has revealed a remarkable sense of humanity and community. Individuals, families and communities have opened their hearts, homes and pockets to help those in dire need. *The silver lining:* The rise in acts of kindness and altruistic attitudes is truly inspiring!

#### **ENTER MENTAL HEALTH**

Over the months, it has become evident that the impact of this pandemic is far-reaching and requires a global response. At the forefront of the global response are frontline workers working tirelessly to save lives. Directly behind them are researchers, and other medics, racing against time in search of a medical solution to curb the spread of the virus. All the while anxiety, fear and stress are at an all-time high globally.

A pandemic is perceived a threat or stressor, therefore all related emotions can be intense. As such, people become more conscious of the threat and increase precautionary measures. However, what begins as a survival mindset can quickly escalate from helpful to harmful if not monitored closely. Once these intense emotions become overwhelming, they may cause you to go into a tailspin that could have dire effects on your overall mental health and well-being. It's therefore important to be on the lookout for signs of diminishing mental-health. These include:

- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns, as well as mood and energy levels.

- Difficulty concentrating and excessive or intense emotions.

#### **COPING GUIDE**

We all tackle and process stressful situations differently, therefore coping with the effects of a pandemic on one's mental health can never be a one-size-fits-all solution. The trick is in knowing and finding what works well for you. However, if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed for an extended period, and can't seem to cope anymore, then it's advisable to seek professional help. Below are a few easy tips to help bolster your mental wellbeing during this time:

- **Experiencing varying emotions during this pandemic is normal.** Also worth noting is that feeling anxious or stressed doesn't necessarily translate to a mental health crisis. However, if you are feeling overwhelmed then reach out to someone you trust and open up to them. Vice versa, if you know of someone in need of emotional support then extend a helping hand. Not only does social connectedness offer a sense of comfort, but it also helps with managing stress and anxiety.
- **Don't isolate yourself.** Maintaining social relationships is equally important, bearing in mind that we still need to comply with social distancing protocols. Fortunately, today's technology allows us to stay connected even though we are physically apart. Stay connected via phone calls or many other digital platforms.
- **Be conscious of the content you consume.** Naturally, the unknown tends to

increase anxiety and fear within people. Only equip yourself with pandemic knowledge and facts from credible sources. That said, limit the amount of time engaged in media coverage related to COVID-19. This engagement could easily become obsessive which, in turn, could increase your anxiety levels and create unnecessary stress. Rather engage in light-hearted conversation with family members or friends.

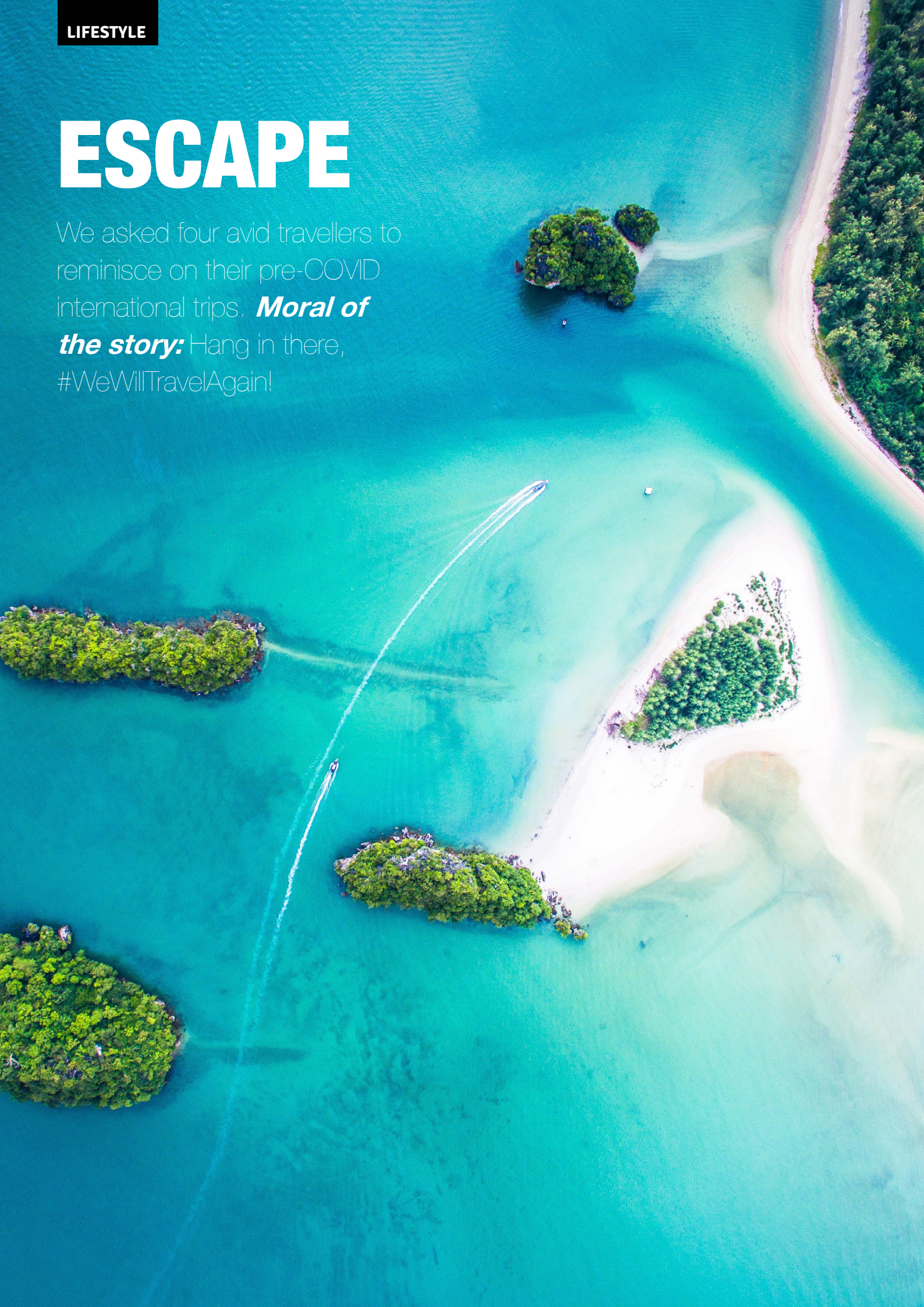
- **Healthy habits first.** Eat healthily, exercise regularly and get enough sleep. Avoid or limit the consumption of caffeine, alcohol and tobacco.
- **Focus on what you can control.** A lack of control exacerbates feelings of anxiety. We, therefore, need to come to terms with that which we cannot control such as taking precautionary measures — wearing face masks, sanitising regularly and maintaining social distancing.
- **Set your eyes on the positive.** Replace negative, unwanted thoughts with positive ones. Engage in uplifting actions such as laughing more, reading an inspiring book, journaling, rejigging your vision board or volunteering at a local community feeding scheme.

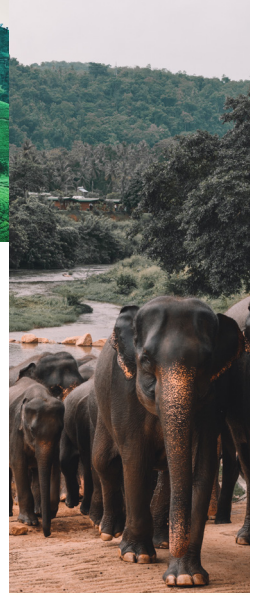
Sources:

- *Psychology practitioners: COVID-19 resource pack. March 2020, Psyssa.com.*
- *Coping with Stress during the 2019-NCoV outbreak, WHO.int.*

# ESCAPE

We asked four avid travellers to reminisce on their pre-COVID international trips. ***Moral of the story:*** Hang in there, #WeWillTravelAgain!





**AVUKILE NZUZO: Bali, Indonesia**

**What inspired the trip?** I hosted friends for my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday getaway in Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, last year. We had so much fun that we thought it would be a brilliant idea to explore an international country together.

**What would you recommend about this destination?** Bali is a cultural hub with many temples, holistic centres, yoga studios and local markets. My most memorable Bali experience was hiking up Mount Batur, an active volcano located north of Ubud and is 1,717 meters above sea level. My second highlight was interacting with the locals and learning more about Balinese culture.

**What would make you return to this destination?** Bali has so much to offer and there were many places I didn't get to explore. I stayed a week, which definitely wasn't enough. We travelled in a group and spent the bulk of our time in long queues to get into most tourist attractions. Our trip was in March this year, at the height of COVID-19 concerns internationally, therefore we didn't try local cuisine. I would definitely love to return for a solo *Eat, Pray, Love* trip.

**Culture shock or interesting epiphany while on the trip:** If you dread road accidents, like I do, the lack of passenger count, lanes, seatbelts and speed limit on motorcycles — which are plentiful on the island — will come as a shock. I remained uneasy even after the locals had reassured us that road accidents were rare. My aha moment was when I realised what a bad idea travelling as a group of seven females was — that's a story for another day! [chuckles]

**Trip notes:** Alcohol is expensive, try buying it at a duty-free shop — but first find out how many litres you're allowed to bring in. The weather is tropical all-year round so pack accordingly!



**CASSANDRA PILLAY: Hong Kong, China**

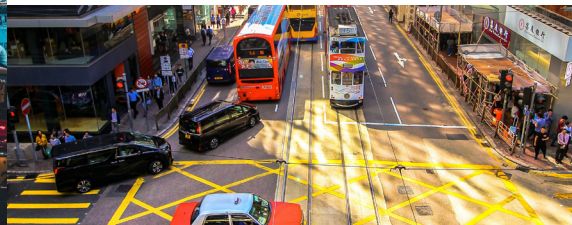
**What inspired the trip?** Hong Kong had always been at the top of my travel bucket list. I have always been intrigued with the level of innovation and advancement intertwined into Hong Kong's rich culture.

**What would you recommend about this destination?** Definitely exploring the different areas such as Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong Island, the Soho District and Mong Kok. They are close in proximity, yet so different!

**What would make you return to this destination?** Hong Kong has the most incredible aura — from the bustling streets to the noisy traffic lights — the city never stops. The public transport options are incredible and the city epitomises 'organised chaos'. I would return in a heartbeat!

**Culture shock or interesting epiphany while on the trip.** I like to think of Hong Kong as a box of chocolates — you just never know what you're going to get! The most interesting and beautiful bars, restaurants and shops are found in the dreariest of buildings, the type you would never consider entering. Hong Kong is also a very wealthy destination — we witnessed a large two-storey Louis Vuitton store being shut down for a private party. On the other hand, the citizens' down-to-earth nature is very surprising. You could walk into a Gucci store eating fried fish and not be looked down upon! [chuckles]

**Trip notes:** Do your research on the best sights, restaurants and bars. Some of Hong Kong's gems are out of sight!



**PULENG PITSO: Ella, Galle and Colombo, Sri Lanka**

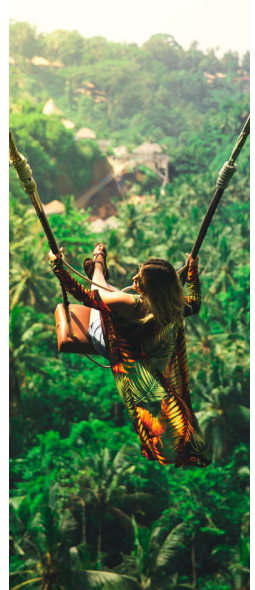
**What inspired the trip?** A colleague and I won an international holiday to a destination of our choice. We wanted to visit a country, other than Thailand, that was affordable and warm in January. Sri Lanka happened to be on my travel bucket list.

**What would you recommend about this destination?** Taking a nine-hour express train ride from Colombo to Ella in the Observation Saloon was well worth the long trip — the views are out of this world! Hiking up Little Adams Peak was a great way to start the day and a perfect way to see the town of Ella in all its glory. Visiting the Nine Arches Bridge, built entirely from rocks, bricks and cement with no use of steel or metal. Hanging out at Hikkaduwa Beach and Unawatuna Beach, as well as visiting the Japanese Peace Pagoda on Rumassala Hill — all located in Galle. Winding down with dinner at Ministry of Crab in Colombo — book in advance, online, to avoid disappointment.

**What would make you return?** The beaches and the many undiscovered sites. I would like to visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth in Kandi, in particular.

**Culture shock or interesting epiphany while on the trip:** The most prominent religion in Sri Lanka is Buddhism. The sale of alcohol is prohibited on religious days, including full moon days, something I was absolutely not ready for! [chuckles]

**Trip notes:** My friends and family had shared useful tips that went a long way in helping me plan my trip. AirBnB was great for booking intimate tourist experiences with vetted locals. Upon arrival, purchase a local sim card, buy airtime and remember that Google and a power bank are your best friends!



**RENEILWE MOKOENA: Brussels, Belgium**

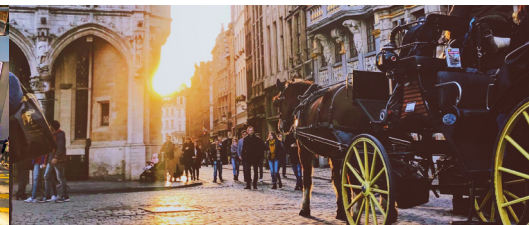
**What inspired the trip?** A good friend was getting married in Brussels. Therefore, trading in Johannesburg's winter for summer in Brussels, for a week leading up to the big day, seemed like a no-brainer.

**What would you recommend about this destination?** From well-known cultural favourites like waffles, fries (frites), mussels, chocolate and Belgian beer to European staples such as pizza and pasta, Brussels is a foodie's haven. The city is vibrant and always abuzz with action. The narrow and tiny cobblestone streets, old buildings and historical sites are ideal for impromptu photo shoots.

**What would make you return to this destination?** The food and vibrant nature.

**Culture shock or interesting epiphany while on the trip:** Africa is definitely well represented in Brussels. It was comforting to bump into many of my African brothers and sisters on the streets.

**Trip notes:** Extend your trip so you can visit the neighbouring European countries. Taking one train ride, for less than three hours, could have you eating a baguette in Paris with the Eiffel Tower as your backdrop or on a small boat, gliding down one of the canals in Amsterdam.



# MY SIDE HUSTLE



**MOSHOPJADI TSIKI** on straddling full-time careers as a Chartered Accountant and fashion entrepreneur.

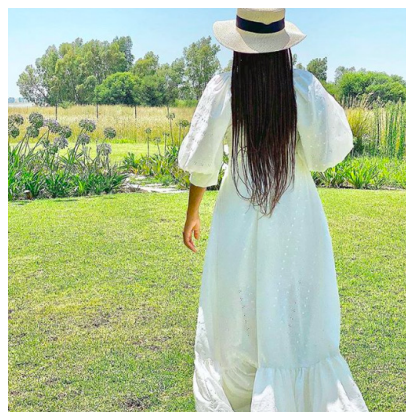
**How did you expand into fashion?** My fashion story is not a typical one. I'm not a left brained creative nor am I a fashion graduate or blogger! I'm a Chartered Accountant by profession, and a year ago I was selling pre-loved clothing on my Instagram page @myopenclozet. I was on maternity leave receiving a third of my pay, with a household to run and bills to pay, and had to think of a smart way to supplement my income. And as the saying goes, 'Follow your passion and you will reap the rewards!'

**Has this career eased your stress and made you happy?** When it comes to leading a happy life, how you manage your money and time decides everything. This very concept is what motivated me to embark on my entrepreneurial journey. I've always loved fashion and saw an opportunity to create a secondary income stream out of it. I owned trendy garments from my international holidays, bold statement items for work and colourful summer dresses. I hosted pop-up stores at my house, and went to music festivals and craft markets to reach a large audience — and increase traffic on my Instagram page. This was an amazing way to engage with new people and increase my network wealth! I had so much fun interacting with my new customers, who loved my clothes and the bargain prices. Business was picking up and I found myself able to comfortably service my debit orders and even had extra money at the end of the month.

**How do you strike a healthy balance between both careers?** I'm still learning how to balance my time between building my legacy, a full-time job and my family. And since time is a moving constant, I've made some sacrifices to help with having enough time for my family and some me-time. The key, I have found, is to be fully present during those moments when I have a bit of time to spend with loved ones.

**How did you move from selling pre-loved clothing to creating your own range?** I randomly decided to experiment with making clothes for various occasions — from edgy party and wedding looks to work attire that stands out. I registered my company Miss Mosh, designed labels and partnered with an influential digital creator for some marketing insights. The Miss Mosh range currently caters to women from all walks of life and custom makes garments for all occasions. No garment is too over-the-top or simple, and I love making fashion dreams come true. You dream it, we make it!

**What would you say has contributed immensely to your business' growth?** I've learnt a lot about the fashion business and continue to discover new and better ways of doing things. What started out as a solution to a financial constraint has turned into a blossoming artistic and commercial adventure for me. I've learnt to be intentional with marketing my brand and showing up for my customers — they take first preference. Listening and tending to my customers' needs has played a key role in the growth of the business and they, in turn, have supported me immensely. I'm big on comfortable and timeless clothing, so producing quality garments remains my top priority. I design the ready-to-wear garments, which can be viewed on my [Instagram page](#), source the fabric and perform quality checks myself. This allows me to be fully immersed in the production of all clothing and to ensure that quality and comfort are maintained throughout.



# PLANT-BASED GOODNESS

## MAHLESEDI MOJAPELO,

popularly known as @withlove\_sedi on social media, ropes us into the art of meal prepping.



If anything, the first phase of lockdown — when fast food joints and restaurants were closed for business — proved just how reliant we are on ready-made meals. Exhausting as it may have been, we were forced to acquaint ourselves with our kitchens and finally use those ingredients we had been stocking up on, but had not quite gotten around to using. Perhaps the most important lesson to take away from this chapter is that preparing fresh meals, ultimately, boils down to two factors — time and a willingness.

As a plant-based food enthusiast, setting aside time to prepare balanced meals in my home is not negotiable. The two rules I stick by religiously are that all the meals must be quick and easy to make, with minimal effort but maximum flavor — and the ingredients must be organic and locally produced. On my own journey to clean eating, I discovered four time-saving kitchen rules that make healthy meal prepping a joy, instead of a chore!



**PLAND AHEAD.** When planning weekly meals, I suggest that you bring the same enthusiasm you use when structuring your day or ticking items off your to-do list. Prepping meals well in advance will ensure that your body's nutritional needs are tended to, especially on busy days. My Sundays are spent planning my weekly meal schedules, compiling my grocery list and shopping for the ingredients. Doing this, I find, is half the battle won! Upon returning, I bulk cook the

grains and beans and roast my vegetables, then store everything in the fridge. Plan everything, right down to your weekly snacks.



**STOCK UP ON CONVENIENT OPTIONS.** For meal planning to work, I stock up on ingredients that are readily-available, store well and are easy to work with. Fresh produce is always a win, but canned or frozen vegetables and beans are ideal when pressed for time and looking to maintain a balanced eating plan. Frozen fruits and vegetables undergo flash freezing, a process where nutrients are locked in while the produce is at its most ripe. Simply put, you can quite easily have more nutrients in frozen produce than in its 'fresh' counterpart — which loses nutritional value with time. Canned and dried beans are tied when it comes to nutritional value. Be sure to rinse canned beans before using them to reduce the amount of sodium. The sodium in canned



beans can be approximately a hundred times that of cooked ones, which is detrimental for heart health, water retention and cellulite.



**BALANCE IS KEY.** There is a myriad of conflicting research where human nutrition is concerned, making a healthy and balanced diet seem much more complicated than it should actually be. The good news is that a balanced meal covers the three core food groups — a quarter of proteins and carbohydrates and half a portion of vegetables.

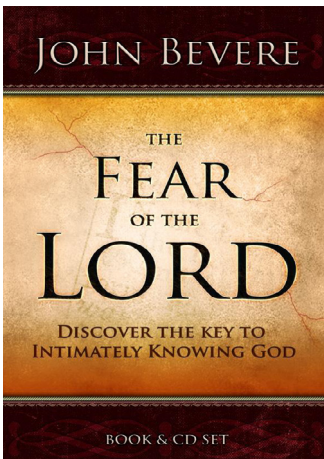
**MORE WHOLE FOODS, LESS PROCESSED OPTIONS.** Cut down on processed foods that are fraught with refined sugars. These trigger spikes in your blood sugar levels, which in turn hampers productivity during the day and is one of the key drivers of the infamous after-lunch slump that many people suffer from. Rather eat whole foods and, instead, feed your sweet tooth with fruit.

Find me on Instagram, @withlove\_sedi, for meal planning tips, recipe ideas or if you would like to share feedback on how you plan to incorporate any of these pointers into your daily eating habits.



# READING LIST

Whatever your emotional or intellectual needs, here are some book recommendations to tuck into!

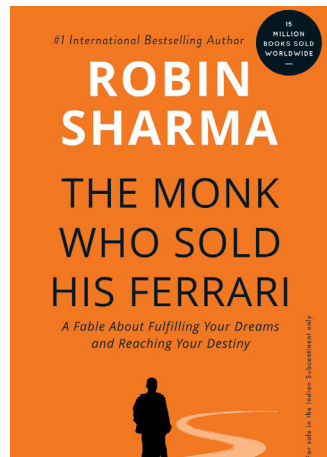


**KATLEGO MABALACA CA(SA)**, Tax Investigative Auditor

**Book that bolstered my spirituality:** *The Fear of the Lord* by John Bevere

**Synopsis:** A new perspective on honouring God that will challenge any rigid mentality once held, clearing the path for a long overdue spiritual upliftment.

**How the book changed my life:** "About five years ago while consumed by my achievements and feeling, almost invincible, I started experiencing a hunger for meaningfulness until I came across this book. Although the title suggests that God is intimidating, the author positions his argument in a way that encouraged me to 'level up' on my spirituality. It draws the line — distinctly so — between the spirit of fear and the fear of God, and preaches reverence instead. The book challenged the basis of my relationship with God through referencing relevant scriptures that helped me navigate life far more confidently than I previously did. The author nudged me towards a heightened sense of acknowledging and honouring a Higher Power. I started paying attention to the posture of my worship, as well as time spent in prayer and meditation. I now understand that I am a spiritual, more than I am a physical, being."

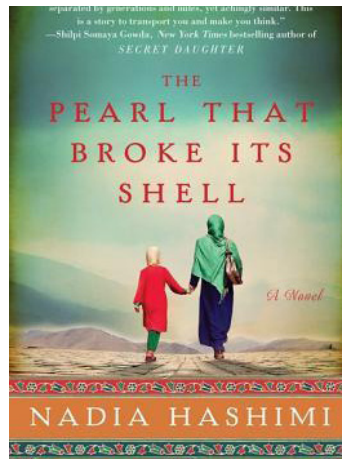


**KARABO NELUHENI CA(SA)**, Financial Controller

**Book that changed my perspective about the world:** *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* by Robin Sharma

**Synopsis:** Without designing the life you want, you settle for whatever life hands you.

**How the book changed my life:** "Through a fictitious character, Julian Mantle — a top-lawyer who seemed to have it all until he suffered a heart attack at 53, the author tells the story of a necessary rude awakening that the main character endures. The heart attack sparked a chain of events that led to many lessons about fulfilling dreams and charting one's destiny. While reading this book, my mind was triggered into assessing the contents of my own life and whether they added any value. 'Will I look back over my life and feel contentment, or would I be filled with regrets?', I asked incessantly. The book forced me to evaluate what is important, brings me fulfilment, joy and vitality. Without practising this exercise, we simply take each day as it is presented to us and play along with whatever happens. Some additional lessons that stood out for me included: mastering only positive thoughts, ditching the rat race in favour of a self-designed and conscious life, spending time on things that will matter in the long run and to live a life of higher purpose through serving others."

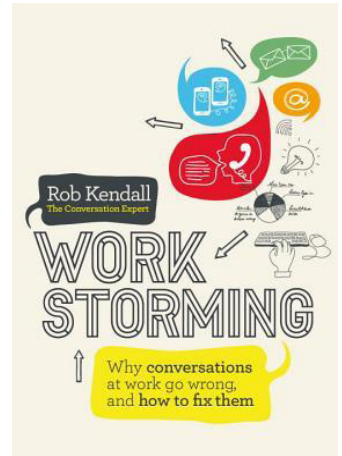


**KHUTHADZO NETHENGWE**, Strategic Conservation Planner

**Book that I keep referencing for wise counsel:** *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi

**Synopsis:** If we took off the societal and cultural blinders that many of us wear, we'd discover how alike our journeys are, how big our small impacts actually are and how significant our individual journeys should be.

**How the book changed my life:** "I enjoy reading books and material that move me far beyond my space of existence. Re-reading this book always re-opens my eyes to how interwoven all human lives are. The *Pearl that Broke its Shell* details an epic tale of two women separated by a century, but who share similar destinies. Set in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2007, Rahima and her sisters are being raised by a drug-addicted father, attend school sporadically and rarely leave the house. Their only hope lies in the ancient custom of *bacha posh*, which allows young Rahima to dress and be treated as a boy until she is of marriageable age. As a son, she can attend school, go to the market, and chaperone her older sisters. I recommend this book to anyone interested in exploring a reality different to their own and uncovering a new layer of themselves by walking in the shoes of someone with whom they share absolutely nothing in common."



**FATIMA MAMOD CA(SA)**, Finance Manager

**Book that changed my career trajectory:** *Workstorming: Why conversations at work go wrong, and how to fix them* by Rob Kendall

**Synopsis:** A guide to communicating in a manner that will help you get your point across effectively and listen with intent.

**How the book changed my life:** "I read this book at a time when all my conversations were going wrong and, in it, found all the tools I needed to dissect my communication style. I was pleasantly surprised that the small communication tweaks that I'd started introducing became noticeable. I saw improvements in relationships across my life, both personal and professional, which encouraged me to further build on my newly learnt skills. The author uses characters and simulates conversations in a manner that is the norm, versus how to have the same conversations using a newly acquired technique. Ever thought about how important listening truly is? We juggle so many facets of our lives that our encounters are more about reactions instead of purpose-driven understanding. As the author suggests, 'Rather than listening, we are preparing to speak. We skim people's sentences, pick out the gist of what they're saying, and then pitch in with our opinions and solutions.' A valuable book for anyone looking to be a better communicator."

# Leveraging the strength of diversity ensures business success.

**What makes us different,  
makes us stronger.**

In a world where the only constant is change, achieving realistic and enduring results is important, and can only be achieved when the theme of positive change is owned by every one of us. At KPMG, we believe that we have a moral and social obligation to our people, clients and society to continue to transform and empower. We are a B-BBEE Level 1 Empowered Supplier.



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# recruitment

*noun*

1. Hand selecting your future team.
2. Drawing on industry experience, partnering with clients to develop tailored recruitment solutions.
3. Adding value to your recruitment process with a customised candidate screening programme to meet specific requirements.

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## RECRUITMENT REDEFINED

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