

The Media Institute of Southern Africa's

Women to Watch in 2015

Southern African women 'making it happen'

On International Women's Day 2015, I am proud to announce the Media Institute of Southern Africa's (MISA) second wave of Women to Watch.

After launching the initiative on the same day last year, we received an overwhelming response of support. So this year, we are again marking International Women's Day by highlighting and promoting the achievements of outstanding women across the region whose work, in different ways, contributes to our vision of a southern Africa where everyone enjoys freedom of expression and pluralism of views and opinions.

We have chosen 9 women, representing a range of different industries and sectors. The thread that binds them all is a passion to succeed, not for the sake of their own success, but for the good of the people and communities they strive to help.

This year, the theme for International Women's Day designated by civil society organisations around the world is, 'Make it Happen,' and in this publication you will meet 9 women who are certainly doing just that.

From an award-winning journalist following in

the footsteps of her idols at Harvard University; to a passionate child rights activist fighting for a better world for children and one where they are free to express themselves safely and freely; to a filmmaker using the medium to give a voice to remote communities and ways of life. These are just some of the incredible women who I am sure will inspire and motivate you to pursue your own goals and dreams this year.

Zoe Titus, Regional Director

Media Institute of Southern Africa



Teresa Chirwa Ndanga



A multi-award winning journalist, Teresa has lead a vibrant newsroom for Malawi's Zodiac Broadcasting for the past seven years. Today, she is following in the footsteps of her heroes, completing a Masters of Public Administration at Harvard University.

Teresa's passion for the media industry is undeniable. "Journalism is my dream job!" she says, "I started wanting to be a journalist when I was still primary school".

In 2005, Teresa was in her third year of a Bachelor in Journalism at the Malawi

Polytechnic, when she was picked to intern at the newly established Zodiac broadcasting station (they have recently expanded into television).

"Apparently the employers were quite impressed ... soon after my graduation in 2007, they offered me full employment," she says.

As a junior reporter she was intimidated, "It was a male-dominated newsroom and I had never

worked in a newsroom before.”

“But I created challenges to prove to myself I could do. I started to pursue investigative journalism because not many female reporters were doing that. In my first year I won an award so I proved to myself I could do it.”

“

I was the first female editor of the newsroom, I was the youngest, at the time I was not even married – and you know how these things can be

In 2010, Teresa won the CNN-Multichoice African Health and Medical Award, and also in that year she was promoted from a reporter straight to the position of editor.

Teresa says this was a challenge, “People who were my supervisors, overnight became by subordinates. So, I was the first female editor of the newsroom, I was the youngest, at the time I was not even married – and you know how these

things can be.

“People were disgruntled, basically because they were on top and then suddenly they were below. So it was really really difficult ... but I didn’t want to give it up because I thought that would be validating the conception that women can’t take up challenging positions.”

On being a woman in media

Teresa says there are more and more women entering newsrooms, but there is still a lack of women in leadership roles.

“Simply because you’re a women sometimes people think, “Oh they can’t be good leaders””, she says. “But I want female journalists to prove the industry wrong, especially the misconceptions that we can’t do investigative journalism, that we can’t lead. I want us to stand out and prove it’s not about being a female journalist.

“I do think the opportunities are there, and women who are hardworking and believe in themselves are taking up challenging roles in the newsroom.”

Teresa’s inspiration

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said, “If your dreams don’t scare you, they are not big enough,” and this constantly motivates me.

All we have to do as women is follow her example. She might have weaknesses, as everyone else has, but I think she is a strong leader.

Every time I feel like I can’t do something, I know I can do it. Even if there is another Teresa within me telling me, oh it’s very difficult you can’t do it, I think about her and I know I can.

Fighting for a positive Africa

At present, Teresa is walking the halls of Harvard University, working toward a Master of Public Administration. But she warns this is not the start of a career change! “I will remain in the field I just want to understand public policy so I have a clear understanding of what people should expect from policy makers,” she says.

Studying at Harvard is a dream come true for Teresa, because two of her great idols – the late BBC World News journalist, Komla Dumor and President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – completed the same degree.

“They both did this program and that is exactly why I am doing it,” she says. “I am sitting in classes that Komla Dumor and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf sat in, so I know that if I put my heart in what I want to do, I can change someone’s life. Journalism can save lives, we’ve proved that It’s not just about writing a story, I just believe I can change lives as my idols have. So whatever I do I am inspired by these two people.”

Teresa says it has been a great year so far, “I’ve never been so inspired about a positive Africa as I’ve been throughout this year.”

“I’m surrounded by people who have done tremendous things in their countries, all around the world and I’m thinking, you know what, maybe I’m a part of these people!

“It helps me challenge myself to do more and inspires me to help make the Africa we know more positive,” she says.

Hopes for the media in Malawi

There are two main changes Teresa would like to see in Malawi’s media industry. The first, is to improve the pay conditions for journalists so they can sustain their lives. “We have a vibrant media,” Teresa says, “but after a few years in the media industry, everyone exits.”

“The responsibilities grow, but we are not paid much. Partly it’s because of our economy but partly I think the media is not taken seriously as something that is contributing to Malawi’s development,” she says.

“I want to see the access to information bill passed and other laws that support journalists

“I’m not saying money should be a motivator but journalists have to be comfortable to remain in the industry. People who are very good and have passion for journalism, are leaving to the public relations industry.

“And I am not saying PR is not as good as journalism. These are people who have passion for journalism and their career should be able to sustain their lives for them to stay in the media and play the so much needed watchdog role that any country needs for their democracy and economy to grow,” she says.

The second change Teresa wants to see is a legal environment that is more conducive to media freedom. “I want to see the access to information bill passed and other laws that support journalists”. She says governments need to stop viewing journalists and the media

Advice to future female journalists

“

There is no difference I can see that enables a male journalist to do any better than a female journalist

Success is all about determination.

I am a mother and wife. I have to be home early sometimes. But I am still performing. It’s not easy, but I am still performing. With determination I think these things can work. You tend to learn to divide your time even better and sometimes, you can even find time for a drink outside work!

as the enemy.

“Not every journalist writes to take down politicians, we are representing the masses who can not directly speak for themselves, it’s not personal. We are just doing our job, making sure our governments are doing the right thing for our country. We will bring someone down if they are doing the wrong thing, but that is not our goal, we want them to do the right thing,” Teresa says.

“We are not the enemy. Corruption is the enemy.”

What’s next for Teresa?

I will head back home [after graduating from Harvard]. I still have my job! Right now it’s quite exciting because we have just started our TV station and I just want us to become a force to be reckoned with in the media industry, not just locally but internationally.

I hope I might also be one of the competitive journalists on the international scene, in Africa and globally. I hope I remain in the media for some time, it’s my passion!

Nashilongo Gervasius



A dedicated mother and journalist whose past – raising her siblings after her mother’s death – has lead to a passionate belief that with opportunities and education any girl can become a woman who can change and lead the world.

As an eight year old growing up in rural Namibia, Nashilongo wanted to be two things: a lawyer or a journalist.

“My father had friends [who were] journalists. Writers and broadcasters who hit bylines and the

airwaves around [the time] when I was born,” she says, “... the more I asked and learned about their careers the more I got interested.”

In 2000, when Nashilongo was 15 years of age and in her second year of highschool, her mother passed away. “Her death shook me but also made me grow up too fast I took responsibility of my two youngest siblings upon leaving University ...”

“Caring for my siblings and a cousin defined me a lot, because while I was parenting them, I was parenting myself too,” she said.

The importance of education

Her past has instilled in Nashilongo a deep appreciation and value for education, especially for young girls. “Without education I wouldn’t have taken care of my siblings, worked, met my husband and got to where I am,” she says.

Nashilongo has invested deeply in her own dedication, earning an Honours Degree in Journalism and recently graduating with a Post Graduate Diploma in Leadership in Information Communication Technologies in the 21st Century from the Dublin City University.

Another interest and passion is governance. “For some time now, I have been doing policy research during my spare time and this has tremendously opened my worldview about governance and good governance altogether,” she says.

Over the next 12 months in
Namibia ...



I would like the new president and his minister to prioritise the access to information law.

I would like to see enhanced public dialogues.

But mostly I would like to see concerted efforts towards the nation’s most pressing needs - reformation of education, land and health issues in our country.

Being a woman in media

Nashilongo says the opportunity to receive education is open equally to males and females in Namibia and more and more newsrooms have become an equal place for both men and women in Namibia.

Although she feels there is still a tendency for women in the media industry to be overlooked for promotion and development opportunities when they have families because it is seen as easier to send a man on foreign missions or other development opportunities.



I ask a lot of questions and I educate myself on matters [as well as seeking formal] qualification ... Education doesn’t end in formal schooling.

Remaining in the newsroom requires more than a presence, she says, “one needs to re-invent themselves, evolve and become engaged in industry changes.”

For those entering journalism, Nashilongo’s advice is to always seek out your own growth opportunities – don’t wait for someone to bring them to you! “I ask a lot of questions and I educate myself on matters [as well as seeking formal] qualification ... Education doesn’t end in formal schooling,” she says.

Inspiration and motivation

“My worldview has been enriched a lot by those whose efforts have gone into bettering humanity,” says Nashilongo. She also finds inspiration in music – “I’m a sucker for Rap, Hip Hop and Modern Rock, 90% in the Christian form” – and art, which she says “offers me an escapism into a world that was or is to come.”

Nashilongo says, “I am motivated by the freedom afforded to us nationals but also the understanding gained in life: we can do more, we can do better.” She is proud of her profession and what it means to be a journalist demanding accountability and transparency of governments. “My motivation comes from the belief that as a



nation we can do better. As a media practitioner, my profession holds the important role of being the fourth estate of government,” she says.

“I am motivated by the freedom afforded to us nationals but also the understanding gained in life: we can do more, we can do better.”

“The public has the right to demand of its elected the service and leadership they think they deserve but most importantly is that [Namibia is] such a small nation, we can stand out even more in terms of governance. We can set better examples for generations to come and this can be done by embarking only on sustainable projects and ideas,” says Nashilongo.

Nashilongo says she has been sent all around the world for reporting projects, “met world leaders here at home and abroad”, had “direct access to [Namibia’s] national leaders” and had the opportunity to travel the “width and

breadth” of Namibia and interact with people from every corner and way of life represented in this country. “But my most inspiring moment so far,” she says, “[was] camping in the villages of Okanguati as we try to recreate our sources of life stories,” she says learning and reporting on “those who do not have the luxury of drawing budgets or even know how to read or write ... just inspire the humanist in me”.

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Judith Mulenga



An ardent advocate for child rights, Judith is the Executive Director of the Zambia Civic Education Association, a non-governmental organization (NGO) promoting and advocating for children's rights through civic education.

Asked what inspires her, Judith listed a quote from Nelson Mandela, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children," and it is clear this philosophy drives her in her advocacy of child

rights. Judith has worked with children and young people throughout her working life and is clearly motivated at a deeply emotional level to ensure the rights of children are respected in Zambia, across the region and throughout the world.

"The earnest trusting faces of very young children motivates me to stand up for what I believe in," she says.

Standing up for children's rights regionally & internationally

Judith is the:

- East and Southern Africa representative on the International NGO Council on Violence against Children
- Chairperson of the Child Rights Network of Southern Africa (CRNSA)
- Co Coordinator of the Zambian Child Rights Forum
- Chairperson of the Zambia Civil Society Constitution Coalition, a member of the Grand Coalition for a People Driven Constitution.

First training and practicing as a teacher in Zambia, Judith later moved into the NGO sector and today, holds a Master of Advanced Studies on Children's Rights from the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch – University of Fribourg in Switzerland and a Master of Business Administration from the Management College of Southern Africa.

"I was intrigued by the whole concept of human rights," says Judith, recalling what inspired her to enter the field.

"Throughout my childhood and part of adulthood I had never heard the concept, until after Zambia reverted to a multi-party democracy in November 1991. After that I could not listen to radio, watch television or read newspapers without the concept popping up at me. I decided to read about it and the more I did, the more I 'saw' violations and the more I became indignant and wanted to do something about it", she says.

Judith specializes in advocacy, awareness raising, monitoring children's rights, training in human and children's rights and mobilising and helping societies to create protective and

participatory environments for children. She says she was hugely inspired by the founder of the Zambia Civic Education Association, Lucy Banda Sichone, who Judith describes as "a formidable fearless human rights defender".

"... I never met her but if the dead see what goes on here on earth she knows how utterly proud I am to work for the organization she founded. I have been working here for 13 years now and I just love my work!" says Judith.

Standing up for the truth

Judith believes in "calling a spade a spade", even though the truth is not always the easy message or the message people want to hear.

"If something has to be said no matter how difficult and I believe in it, I will say it and say it to the person concerned looking them in the eye," she says.

"I have been told that it does not conform to African femininity. I find that incredulous considering that an African woman usually has nothing but her mouth! No economic power, no decision making power, no social power, nothing, nothing except the mouth to lean on and use to leverage and craft a space of her own in our patriarchal societies!"

Being a woman in the NGO sector

There is a fair representation of women in the NGO sector in Zambia, but men still dominate at director level.

Judith says working in the sector, especially for local NGOs, requires long hours and time away from home and family, something that drives many women to leave for more stable financially predictable sectors. This leads to ignorant stereotyping of NGO's.

For example, Judith recalls a listener calling into a radio talk-back program who arrogantly stated, '.... you want to bring confusion in our nation because you NGOs are full of divorced women.'

The call came during a discussion about the human rights imperative to protect children against abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.



... an African woman usually has nothing but her mouth! No economic power, no decision making power, no social power ... nothing except the mouth to lean on and use to leverage and craft a space of her own in our patriarchal societies!

Moments of inspiration

Judith recalls a time when she was waiting in her car at a set of traffic lights where children who work and live on the streets frequently beg for money from passing motorists.

“A little boy came to the open window of my car and asked me for money. I was in an irritable mood and I asked him why he does not for once also give me money.

“He quietly reached in his shorts’ pockets and gave me the equivalent of 50 ngwee in the old currency. I was so moved that I also quietly dipped my hand in my handbag and gave him some money.

“I have never forgotten the beam on his face. He gave me a thumbs-up sign like we had just concluded a very good ‘win win’ deal. The lights turned green and I drove off. But immediately my bad mood lifted and I was elated the rest of the day!”

Children & the media

Judith passionately believes children have a lot to share, and only need to be given the space, voice and context for “their self-expression to be of relevance and not to fulfil a ‘fixture’ of children’s voices and tick off the check-list.”

Judith points out that media is intimidating even to adults, so there are a number of things we can, and should, be doing to help children express themselves comfortably and naturally:

- Creating safe spaces to capture children’s views in their natural habitat, where they are usually found. Interviewing children in a studio makes children do what they do best

– give you what they think you want to hear.

- When a child is represented by the media, the decision to do that should be voluntary and, as far as possible, initiated by the child, who should be well informed and able to opt out at any time.
- Children should be requested and expected to express themselves on matters that are relevant to them.

“Training of journalists in engaging with children is absolutely essential. Providing regular spaces for children to engage with journalists / media personnel is also crucial as both the children and the journalist pick up on each others nuances and become comfortable with each other,” says Judith.

“But most importantly, providing children opportunities to report on children can help to tell the children’s story in a way that adults can never do. Children have a unique body of knowledge about their lives, needs and concerns which derive from their direct experiences that can best be told by themselves.”

Hoping for change ...

As Zambia revises its constitution, Judith hopes for people-driven constitution that:



... will transform our society into a more equitable, fairer, kinder and genuinely more democratic Zambia

... will promote utmost inclusivity and that devolves power to the people. I want to see women and men in leadership who when they let the people down will be the first to raise a placard and demonstrate against themselves!

Josephine Chinele



An award winning journalist with Blantyre Newspapers Limited, Josephine is passionate about reporting on health, women and child rights issues and giving a voice to those who can't always speak for themselves.

Josephine doesn't believe in giving in to obstacles! "I find another way of getting what I want done. That's what has kept me going in the journalism profession the past ten years, since I apply this rule in everything I do, including my job", she says.

Josephine has been a journalist for almost 10 years, working for the state owned Malawi News Agency (Mana) for nine years before joining Blantyre Newspapers Limited (TimesMediaGroup) in May 2014.

She loves feature writing and her true passion is reporting stories on health, women's rights and child rights. Her passion has been recognised and further developed through a number of

Josephine's inspiration

“My subconscious mind processes all things of an affirmative nature while I sleep and reject all mental concepts that could be detrimental to my health, happiness and success. I will experience a greater degree of success and happiness tomorrow that I experienced today. I am a reflection of all that is good. I allow God to express through my mind all truths. God's peace rests and moves freely through my life. I have faith in my ability to succeed in any specific area of my work and generally in my quest for a happier life”

Brian Adams, How to Succeed

Being a woman in media

“It has not been easy to work in the media, which is regarded as a male-dominated profession,” says Josephine.

“Of course over the years things have changed, but we still have a long way to go”, she says.

Josephine feels that perceptions are changing slowly, however, the barriers are still there. She says that is why many female journalists work in the main stream media for only a short time before leaving and moving into communication roles.

Motivation and inspiration

“If you meet me for the first time, you will notice many things that tell you I am a journalist,” says Josephine. She feels like she was born to be a journalist and is constantly motivated by her profession and the industry.

She says she is inspired by veteran journalists Penny Paliani-Kamanga and Pilirani Semu-Banda.

journalism fellowships in these fields.

Giving a voice to the vulnerable

Josephine's drive to give a voice to the vulnerable was also recognised when she won MISA Malawi's award for reporting on HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Her winning story was titled: ‘At night some women vend more than fruits’. The story exposed how women vendors at Blantyre Central Business District (CBD), who were there under the pretext of selling fruit and vegetables, were actually sleeping with security guards and other men to make extra money, and were exposing themselves and their partners to HIV infection.

Hopes for the media in Malawi

In the next 12 months, I would love to see more women journalists getting into investigative journalism and their media houses giving them the necessary support.

Advice to up-and-coming female journalists

“

Journalism is not only for men and it is the fresh female graduates that will enrich the profession with more females in the industry.

Journalism is an exciting job because you get to interact with more people, get professional exposure and learn about so many different things.

Oshosheni Hiveluah



Oshosheni is a Namibian-born filmmaker who strives to tell stories exploring and questioning how humans relate to one another and deal with the day-to-day complexities of life.

Raised in the German Democratic Republic and returning to Namibia after Independence, Oshosheni says it was when she moved to Cape Town, South Africa, for university that she really found her creative streak and realised she was meant

to be a filmmaker.

“In life we are all trying to figure out what we are here to do, where our strengths lie and how we can use them to impact the world, to leave a lasting impression and become the best version we can possibly be,” she says.

“When I came back to Namibia [after studying in Cape Town] I decided to make a choice about



Being a woman in film

Oshosheni says “there are still too few women as head of [film] departments, maybe in costume/wardrobe and make-up but in other areas it’s very male dominated.”

“To be one female and having to stand up for your vision can be a challenge especially when people might think you might not be as good as a male for whatever reason.”

Oshosheni recalls experiences where “people would just stare at me while I was explaining what I wanted because they found it so hard to have a woman tell them what to do, it’s a twisted mind-set that needs to be set straight. I am not bossing you around, I am explaining and sharing the vision for the film so we can work together to achieve it.”

“I am very well aware that I can’t make a film by myself”, she says, “but characters like that, you just don’t call them again... It’s about being professional on a job”.

what I wanted to do with my life and stick to it. I first did an 8-5 job but was so utterly bored out of my mind I would try think up excuses each day why not to go. Then I quit that and began writing and was doing some theatre and eventually my friends and I wrote a script and before I knew it I had directed a film.

“In life we are all trying to figure out what we are here to do, where our strengths lie and how we can use them to impact the world, to leave a lasting impression and become the best version we can possibly be”

“Since then, filmmaking it has been. Filmmaking has really shaped me into a better person and provided me with amazing opportunities to travel and meet filmmakers from around the globe and see films I would otherwise never have access to seeing.”

Advice to women entering the film industry ...

“

Know what you want to do and be firm. Know who you are, the type of stories you want to tell, the conversations you want to arise out of the films you make.

Most importantly, be kind to people, everyone from the runner to the Executive producer. Everybody helps to make your film.

Finding her fit

Oshosheni says she didn't so much choose the film industry, as it chose her, "I wrote a script and then I directed it and then I just knew we fit, it's like finding the perfect glove for your hand," she says.

"I just knew I was created to do this I have a deep rooted passion for storytelling ... I remember my first visit to the cinema was a mind-blowing experience, I will forever treasure it.

"It took a little while to figure out how to contextualise all my interests and realise that I should actually be making films ... I would see images in my mind and moods and think about themes. That's how I started writing, then I got into theatre, but I felt it wasn't enough and then when I got to film, I was like 'Aha this is IT! I have arrived. This is what I am going to do'."

Looking to the future

Oshosheni wants to see more women making local films and telling interesting stories – and more money devoted to making it possible!



Oshosheni's inspiration

'Above all else guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it'.

Prov 4:23

'As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another.'

Prov 27:17

'For receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right, just and fair.'

Prov 1:3

"More women directors would be great, more women producers and executive producers who can fund more films dealing with women issues.

"I feel there is a need for women to tell their stories from their perspective, it's a personal thing, a delicate touch is required ... women are strong, amazing, powerful and they can also be delicate, fragile and vulnerable".

She also wants to see more opportunities for young black directors to do commercial and feature films.

"There is really a lack", says Oshosheni, "I mean if I think that this year was the first time a black African director was nominated in the Oscars for Best Foreign Film, yooooo!"

Follow Oshosheni

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Mary Pais Da Silva



A qualified attorney admitted to Swaziland's High Court in 2003, Mary's experience and accomplishments span the strict formality of the halls of justice to the explosive activism of the "trenches" in the struggle for democracy and human rights in Swaziland.

Mary's passion for the law and firm-held belief in fairness and social justice started in childhood, with the values her parents taught her and practiced their selves. And even in school,

the young Mary fought injustice, challenging autocratic teachers and protecting "underdog" schoolmates from bullying.

Mary's interest in law was further kindled by her neighbour, the late well-respected lawyer Douglas Lukhele. She says, "It was like living with a legend - he himself had been arrested and detained under [Swaziland's] 60 day detention law. As part of his legacy he raised powerful

lawyers – if you look around now the cream of the crop of senior lawyers came up under his guidance. It was amazing growing up around that energy.”

Mary says practicing law was simply an extension of her desire to confront injustice and promote fairness in society by balancing the scales. With this passion for justice, it was inevitable Mary would end up in the world of politics and human rights.

Defending human rights

Mary works along the full spectrum of defending human rights.

At the grassroots level, she helps community members and women’s groups understand their legal rights.

As a trainer, Mary imparts knowledge and skills – often voluntarily and without pay – on legal and human rights, democracy and advocacy for a range of organisations, including the Foundation for Socio-economic Justice, Women and Law

in Southern Africa and Council of Swaziland Churches, among many others.

Mary is a member of Lawyers for Human Rights Swaziland and has participated in a number of high profile cases, including the recent Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu case challenging Swaziland’s draconian legislation on freedom of expression, association and assembly. She has also given pro bono assistance in ‘unwanted cases’ referred by others who know her willingness to help.

As an advocate for human rights, Mary has travelled extensively in Africa and beyond, telling the Swaziland story and disseminating accurate information about the state of human rights in the Kingdom.

On being a women in her industry

“... a woman lawyer may be as equally qualified as her male counterpart, [but] there are still the stereotypes that perpetuate women’s subordination within the profession. At the beginning of my career this underestimation of my abilities as a woman served me well as ... I surprised opponents but ... inequality between women and men in the legal profession should not be.”

Mary knows all too well the barriers of patriarchy Swazi women face, as she has faced many herself. She says the biggest barrier to women becoming lawyers is “[Swazi] socialisation and culture, which actually stops us achieving our potential because it places limitations of what is appropriate for a women and how far she can go.”

Mary also says there is a lack of female lawyers from rural backgrounds, probably because Swaziland’s rural communities practice and enforced traditional culture more strongly.

“Socialisation creates a limiting self-perception for women, which can affect their confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness – all the qualities you need as a lawyer,” says Mary.

Inspiraton and motivation

Mary is inspired on a daily basis by the people she works with – human rights defenders and the people on whose behalf she acts. She is particularly moved by the grassroots women

Mary’s inspiration

A reminder not to remain indifferent
in the face of injustice:

“First they came for the Socialists,
and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade
Unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I
did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there
was no one left to speak for me”

Pastor Martin Niemöller

and the resilience they show in overcoming a multiplicity of challenges.

Challenges

There have been many cases and incidents in her work history that have challenged Mary.

Mary recalls when she represented a transgendered individual. Issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals (LGBTI) are highly controversial in Swaziland and not well accepted. Mary says, “I found this experience enriching ... it gave me an opportunity to dig deeper into unfamiliar territory in our law.”

“While this was a criminal case, issues of gender orientation and identity and how these influence a person’s interaction with their environment were relevant and had to be raised.

“Dealing with some of these conceptual issues also provided an opportunity for me to “educate” the court and my opponent,” she says.

“While Swaziland still has a long way to go in terms of recognition and respect of human rights, let alone LGBTI rights, I like to think I contributed to the growth of the law in this area by highlighting dimensions of a case which ordinarily would not have been taken into account,” Mary says.

Family – the centre of Mary’s world

Mary does not let that stress and difficulty of her work stop her from living life. Her family is the centre of her world and spending time with her sons and the rest of her family and friends provides fulfilment and “sanity” in her busy world.

An avid reader from a young age, Mary believes reading opens up horizons and allows us to experience different viewpoints and see more possibilities. She is also an accomplished singer and in her younger years performed opera alongside greats such as Pretty Yende.

Mary says her greatest achievement to date is being a mother – “Nothing can beat that!” But she is also cautious stating, “With all that my work entails, I like to keep my boys away from the hustle and bustle of what I do so they are protected against any reprisals or sanction.”



Hoping for change in Swaziland

“The one change I would like to see is a more equal society that provides for self-determination, equal opportunities and justice for all.

The biggest barrier to this is the current system of governance coupled with the manner in which we are socialised and indoctrinated into the belief that ... some are more equal than others. We can get through this barrier [with] leadership that cares for the human person and has the political will to change things.”

A fighter to the end

Asked how long she intends to continue with this type of work, Mary says, “As long as society is unequal and there is injustice, I am going to be there.”

Follow Mary:

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Happiness Watimanywa



Happiness is a committed humanitarian who is passionate about helping young Tanzanian females claim their right of access to information, particularly on the topic of reproductive health.

The first born of three children, Happiness grew up in the rural west of Tanzania where she says, “women who demonstrated great pride, courage, love, womanhood and a devotion to helping develop their communities” inspired and motivated her

every day.

In 2013, Happiness was crowned Miss Tanzania – a platform she viewed as an opportunity to help improve the lives of those less privileged than herself.

Happiness is always on the lookout for the next challenge and adventure (summitting Mount Kilimanjaro has already been ticked off the list)

to satisfy her eager curiosity! In every experience, she looks for new ways to learn.

“I love to travel. Old places and new. There is always a new experience or discovery in store. Long drives- yes. Especially on dusty roads! Adventure- Absolutely!”

Advocating for greater access to information in Tanzania

In 2014, Happiness began work on Project Fahari, with Marie Stopes Tanzania. She was motivated to join the project after discovering that far too many girls in Tanzania do not have access to information about their reproductive health and puberty or basic knowledge about personal female sanitation and hygiene.

“The topic is still considered a cultural taboo in quite a number of areas in Tanzania,” she says.

“As an older sister, I felt an immense responsibility to empower girls through the sensitisation and provision of education on the important nature of menstrual health management,” says

Happiness.

According to the project, a 2010 to 2011 poll in Tanzania revealed more than 6,500 girls dropped out of school because they became pregnant.

“...girls do not have access to information about the changes that happen to them during puberty, and how they can look after themselves.

“Girls become sexually active from as early as the age of 9 years, while 25% of secondary school students begin bearing children,” Happiness says.

“A key part of the problem is that girls do not have access to information about the changes that happen to them during puberty, and how they can look after themselves.”

As part of Project Fahari – swahili for ‘pride’ – Happiness visited two secondary schools in the rural region of Mwanza and held workshops and





Happiness's advice to women for achieving your dreams ...

“

Confidence and appreciation of self-worth are very important for a woman no matter the industry.

I think women are very selfless beings but we often forget how to love ourselves, or the impact our existence brings into the world. Thousands of people yearn for role models, and to be in the spotlight and inspire people it is important to live by example. The first step is to love yourself

discussions about puberty, menstruation and family planning.

Happiness is also a firm believer in the importance of books and this passion has driven her to join forces with Project Kitabu, which aims to improve the state of literacy in Tanzania

Happiness has always been a keen reader and now is using her profile to help other children discover and gain access to the world of information and entertainment available through books.

“The book is a powerful object”, she says, “and it is one of the most spectacular of human inventions.

“Through books, our senses are brought to life through our imagination so that somehow we smell, touch, taste and hear the thoughts, dreams and experiences of others through the words they communicate on the page. And there are always new voices, new figures and new ideas waiting to be exposed,” says Happiness.

“

Sometimes I think my parents named me on purpose, even when I'm not happy, I'm always Happy. And so sharing myself and giving bits of happiness replenishes my fuel to go out and bring a smile to someone's face and touch their heart.

Motivation and inspiration

Happiness says her name always acts as a reminder and motivator to stand for her beliefs. “I think that everyone has a right to happiness but there are a great many things that stand in their way. For some it's literacy and others it's education ... Sometimes I think perhaps my parents named me on purpose, even when I'm not happy, I'm always Happy. And so sharing myself and giving bits of happiness replenishes my fuel to go out and bring a smile to someone's face and touch their heart.

Noxolo Nkabinde



Noxolo has been reporting for the Swazi Observer for more than two years, after starting there as an intern fresh out of high school. She says her role as a journalist is the perfect platform to advocate for change on issues such as poverty and human rights.

Noxolo says she has always loved writing, “since I was a child – from keeping a diary as a child, getting involved in school magazines, to writing letters to the editor. I have always been opinionated and wanted to express myself in writing,

as it was the best way I knew how.”

She currently writes for her paper’s news section, which she says allows her to “spread her wings” and cover a diverse range of critical issues such as challenges faced in the communities in Swaziland. She was also recently selected to represent Swaziland at a workshop for Young Female Writers in South and East Africa that was hosted by the United Nations Population



“I was turned back because of my gender, and the source told me that I was not strong enough for what he was about to show me and he needed a male reporter. He also made a comment on the pants that I wore saying I showed no respect for the Swazi ancestors. Those are the things that we may see as minor challenges in the newsroom because we have gotten used to them, but are still barriers,” she says.

Noxolo also says while the Swazi media industry is male dominated – “I am yet to see a women editor in any of the main publications in my country” – she receives a lot of support from her editors.

“Though, the support I get from my editors is massive and they do not restrict the work that they give to me. In the newsroom, we are not treated according to gender but whatever they see fit for a particular reporter is given to them,” says Noxolo.

“My editors believe in me so much that every day they are looking for ways to improve my skills.

Fund (UNFPA).

Being a women in media

Noxolo says she has noticed the challenges of working in a male dominated industry. “[It] certainly is not easy, especially if you are also the youngest in the newsroom,” she says. “As much as the situation [in Swaziland] may be far better as compared to other countries where women are not even given important assignments, there are still challenges that we face.” For example, Noxolo gave the example of one assignment where she could not proceed, because of her gender.

“Be strong and don’t let people tell you it’s not an industry for women, nothing in this world comes with a tag that says ‘For Men’ except for the label on the men’s room”.

A mother’s wise words

“

Born in a family of all girls, my mother raised us single-handedly and taught me that there is nothing I cannot do simply because I am a woman. Actually, being a feminist herself, she would be more upset if a boy beat me in a test than if it was a girl. Basically, she taught me to beat boys in everything I do because she grew up in a different era where boys were better by default.

“They believe that I have massive potential of making it in the industry and that motivates me every day.”

Inspiration and motivation

Noxolo says she is inspired daily by the people she encounters.

“Working in an environment where I get to interact with phenomenal women in all sectors gives me inspiration, from a woman selling at the market to take her children to school, the only woman who was voted into parliament, to outstanding individuals who bring change to my country.”

She says her aim to use the platform she has been given through her role in the media industry to empower women in Swaziland, inspire others and advocate for women’s rights.

Hopes for the Swazi media industry

“The change I would love to see is women actually making it to the top. Like many other industries in Swaziland, the media industry lacks role models and if there are no women that are successful in media to look up to, women in media may be extinct in the future,” says Noxolo.

“Society frowns upon the girl child going into this industry because of this reason and the fact that government does not make it a priority course to sponsor does not help. Students are moving away from studying journalism because of lack of funding and I dream of a Swaziland where our government will see the importance of having trained people in media, and for it to actually be seen as a career option as compared to a hobby or a bridging job.”

Advice to women entering the media industry

Noxolo says the media industry is all about passion, “If you do not have a passion for it then do not do it.

“You have to be able to deal with the pressure, deal with different kinds of people from all walks of life and be able to treat them equally whether it is a notable dignitary to a distressed widow that walks into the newsroom.

“Be strong and don’t let people tell you it’s not

an industry for women, nothing in this world comes with a tag that says ‘For Men’ except for the label on the men’s room”.

“Students are moving away from studying journalism because of lack of funding and I dream of a Swaziland where our government will see the importance of having trained people in media, and for it to actually be seen as a career option as compared to a hobby or a bridging job.”

Follow Noxolo

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Jokate Mwegelo



Jokate is a former beauty queen, now enterprising businesswomen who is passionate about equipping other young Tanzanian women with the skills they need to become financially empowered and to run their own businesses.

At just 24 years of age, Jokate already has a long list of skills and roles to her name: TV personality, singer and all-round artist, award winning actress, not to mention honours graduate who achieved one of the top scores in

her class (B.A Honours in political science and philosophy) at the University of Dar es salaam.

Jokate is most driven to act on issues of education, health, business and empowering the girl child. These passions lead to her recent entrepreneurial venture, establishing her first beauty and lifestyle brand, Kidoti. She is aiming to expand the brand across Tanzania and to eventually launch it in other parts of Africa and

internationally.

The philosophy behind the business, whose tag line is “Define your beauty”, is that women should be in control of their lives and feel empowered. Jokate says this comes with understanding our inner beauty, that is, our innate abilities, strengths and everything that makes us who we are. The outer adornments are just an expression of this internal understanding and confidence.

This philosophy extends to Jokate’s long-term views for her business. She wants to open her company up to wholesale business, targeting young women in an effort to encourage more women to strive for financial independence and to be empowered by running their own businesses.

“...women should be in control of their lives and feel empowered. This comes with understanding our inner beauty, that is, our innate abilities, strengths and everything that makes us who we are. The outer adornments are just an expression of this internal understanding and confidence.

The process of starting her own business has been a challenging one, and there have been bumps along the way, including a last minute decision by their first manufacturing partner to pull. But with each bump comes a new lesson learned, and with a new, and more relevant, business partner on board and a better understanding of how to financially safeguard the business from unexpected issues, she is excited for what the future holds.

Motivation and inspiration

“I’m inspired by my mum and her way of dealing with matters wisely and calmly. In my field, you definitely need to be calm, wise but assertive.

What inspired me to become a businesswoman was to see a female driven brand/company ... I felt that we needed a successful female driven enterprise. Knock off these males on these

People who inspire Jokate

“

Cristiano Ronaldo’s discipline and hard work inspires me.

Beyonce definitely inspires me as a businesswoman, wife and mother doing it all fabulously.

I look up to Oprah and Michael Jordan. Their brands are still relevant today



Forbes' lists! Mostly though, to inspire a huge population of females to dare to dream big beyond their imagination, beyond what society has presented to us so far. We as a society can do better and have a better representation of females up their owning big businesses."

Jokate says there are a number of quotes she lives by, mostly from Steve jobs, on following one's gut and intuition. One of her favourite quotes is:

"Your time is limited, don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living the result of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other opinions drown your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition, they somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

This quote has helped her overcome negativity, particularly stereotypes or limitations she feels some people have tried to put on her. "When I was in high school, nobody believed I could be a beauty queen," she says. "Then, once I became a beauty queen no one thought I would graduate with flying colours from university or elevate my brand to something more substantial and sustainable."

"I write my own script to life. I'm an original. I love being a trailblazer. I feel that's why God put me on this earth. To fearlessly be myself and inspire others to do the same," says Jokate.

Standing up for what she believes

Jokate is constantly motivated to stand up for what she believes is right and true and she says this comes from the way she was raised and an appreciation for the opportunities her family, and life in general, has provided her.

"Quite simply, my parents went out of their way to provide for me and give me a good education. Not everyone has that privilege. So all that I am today is a collection of all these positive experiences that have instilled in me an abundant amount of confidence that there is nothing that I set my mind to that I can not accomplish.

"Nothing, no one can stop me or take away what God has instilled in me.

Jokate's advice to women for achieving your dreams

"Stay positive, be focused, know your strengths ... get the job done with no excuses, learn, network, take care of your image, travel and learn from different cultures, be thoughtful, give back, love hard, " says Jokate.

Follow Jokate

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