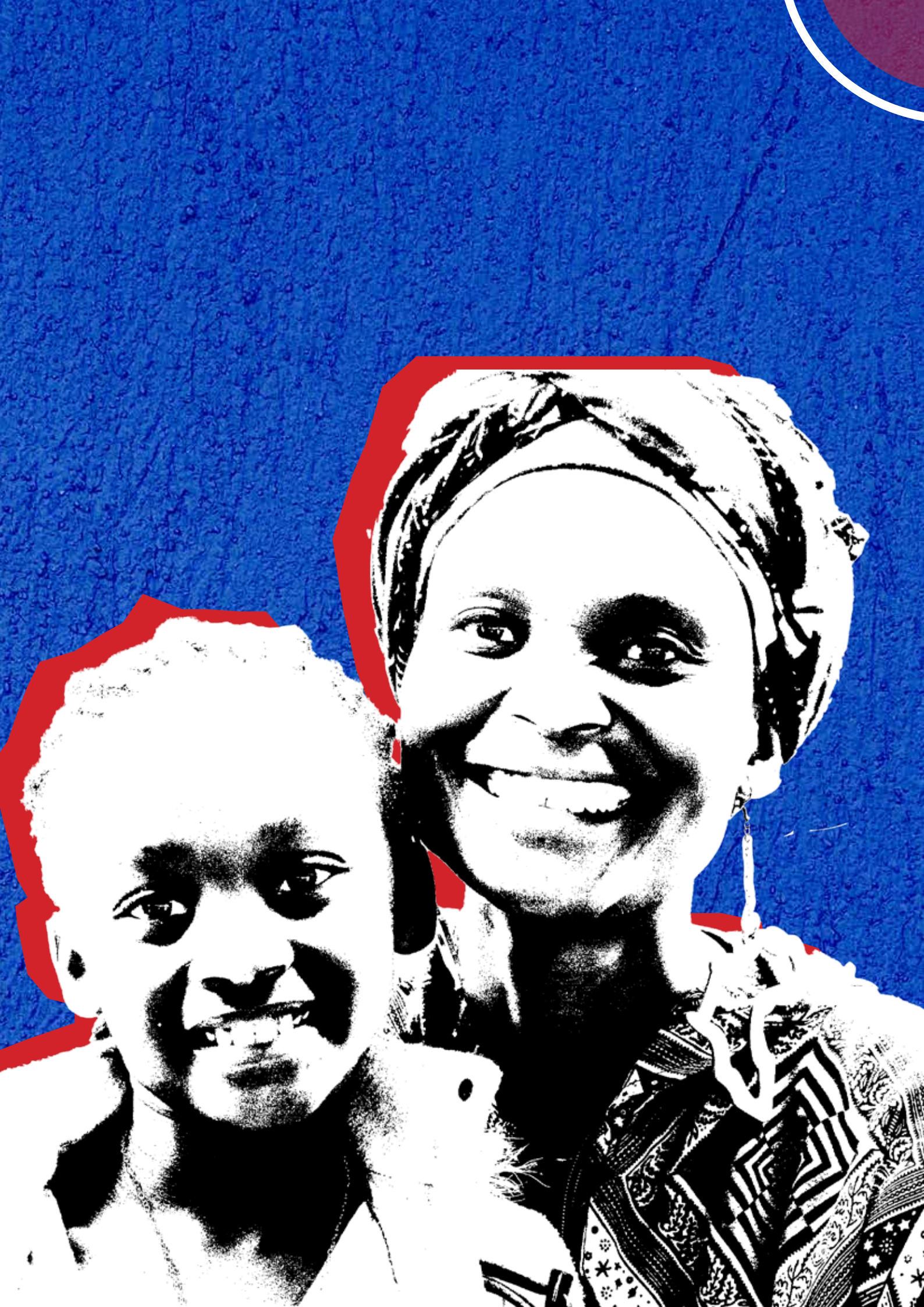


FLAC

FEMINIST LEADERSHIP & ACTIVISM CENTRE

MAGAZINE





LETTER FROM THE CEO

The Soul City Institute is proud to have reached this milestone, having successfully inducted 20 diverse young women into feminism. We began the FLAC programme with a simple idea: to develop a programme that would equip emerging leaders with the tools and strategies to challenge multiple systems of oppression. Reflecting on this journey, we can confidently say that we have achieved this goal.

Feminism is a complex, multifaceted ideology, and so is feminist leadership. Despite being advocates of social equity, feminists globally are stigmatised and demonised by society at large, partly because their ideologies challenge longstanding stereotypes related to women, femininity, and the generational patriarchy supporting these constructs. For this reason, the FLAC programme is committed to movement-building work, co-creating with the fellows and collectively re-imagining how to dismantle power structures and support relationship-building for a more intersectional feminist activism.

The curriculum delivered through the fellowship supported efforts to advance the cause of gender justice, promote economic advancement, protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women and gender-nonconforming communities, and build intersectional and intergenerational movements across the nine provinces.

The two-year journey with the fellows embodied the principle of "the personal is political," asserting that anyone who feels the sting of oppression has the right to name it and lead the movement to dismantle it. We witnessed the transformative journey of the different fellows, whose voices are now amplified and who are changing and adding alternative and missing narratives in their social environments. The leadership journey of the FLAC fellows has translated into a cross-national movement of emerging activist leaders, whose previously suppressed and excluded voices and experiences are now finding space and recognition both among their peers and in their communities.

Overall, with FLAC, Soul City has contributed to the improvement of the fellows' situations in the social, political, economic, public, and private spheres, as well as to the recognition of their rights and opportunities, as will be demonstrated in this magazine.

We appreciate the support afforded by the Ford Foundation and everyone else who participated in this programme as facilitators, mentors, and learning platforms for the fellows. We also thank the organisations that opened their doors for the fellows during their secondments, allowing for greater learning and application. Your partnership with us made this journey more valuable.

To the fellows, you hold the power and do not need anyone's permission to live freely with self-determination. Go out there and use the skills and tools imparted to you in this programme.

Sincerely,

Phinah Kodisang

LETTER FROM THE FLAC PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

How do I begin? As a flagship programme of the Soul City Institute, I have been excited to be part of the team that incubated this initiative and saw it through to what it is now. New to the organisation and implemented as a pilot, the programme was challenging to execute but exhilarating when considering what it aimed to achieve. Two years later, we are here: the first FLAC cohort successfully graduating, and we will soon have our first group of FLAC alumni. Indeed, as you look into some of the stories that our dear fellows have shared in this magazine, it has been a fulfilling journey.

Young women and girls, in all their diversities, face difficulties in their everyday lives and are still very much confronted with challenges such as gender-based violence (GBV), sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), discrimination against the LGBTQI community, as well as climate and economic challenges. Through this programme, 20 young people have been empowered, and their feminist consciousness has been raised to deal with these issues.

Congratulations to our beautiful fellows!

Sincerely,

Mphutsako Majoro

Contents

6

GET TO KNOW THE FELLOWS

Get to Know the Inaugural Fellows of our Feminist Leadership and Activism Centre.

8

IDENTICAL FEMINIST VIEWS

Identical twins championing feminism together.

10

BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

A perspective from a young South African woman.

12

MUSLIM FEMINIST

Feminism has existed in Islam for a very long time.

14

ADD HER SAY

Casting a feminist vote.

16

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN 4IR

Opportunities in Entrepreneurship and Remote Work.

18

FEMINISM ACROSS GENERATIONS

From grandmothers' wisdom to daughters' boldness.

20

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AFRO-FEMINIST

Afro-feminism aims to dismantle the systemic oppressions that affect 'black' women uniquely.

28

RAISING A FEMINIST DAUGHTER

Human rights feminist Thandekile Moyo, on raising a feminist daughter.

30

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY/ACTIVISM

When we talk about feminism, we talk about creating a world or future where women's voices are heard.

32

YOUNG WOMEN'S ROLE IN A TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIETY

The role young women and adolescent girls play in a transformative society.

34

UNPACKING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The root causes of GBV in South Africa, including culture, patriarchy, poverty, and religious beliefs.

GET TO KNOW THE INAUGURAL FELLOWS OF OUR FEMINIST LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVISM CENTRE

As we work towards a world where girls, women, and LGBTQIA+ persons thrive, we recognise the importance of creating a space for young leaders to connect, learn, and collaborate for collective impact. Our Feminist Leadership and Activism Centre (FLAC), developed in partnership with the Ford Foundation, is dedicated to

raising feminist consciousness among young South Africans. Since its launch, 20 emerging leaders from across the country have been participating in a hybrid learning format. They've been working on individual projects to address their communities' needs, with tailored mentoring support. Meet some of these inspiring fellows and learn about their journeys.

LERATO IRIS KHUMALO LINDLEY

FREE STATE, LINDLEY | Age: 25

Lerato joined FLAC to deepen her understanding of feminism and find ways to develop her community. She's successfully launched the Future Leaders Club, focusing on health and education for young women, particularly those out of school.

Highlight: Building strong relationships with other fellows and learning from their perspectives has been invaluable.



CLEMENTINE JANE SHAWE

WITBANK, MPUMALANGA | Age: 25

Clementine's curiosity and desire to deepen her understanding of feminism led her to FLAC. For her, feminism is about equality and creating safe spaces for young women to live freely without fear of judgment. She's currently developing a club for young girls and boys in her community, aiming to teach feminism from a young age to help boys unlearn toxic masculinity.

Highlight: Clementine has discovered that the programme isn't just about community work but also self-development. "Lots of knowledge," she says, has been the most rewarding part of her experience.



MAKHOSEMVELO MTHEMBU

KATLEHONG, GAUTENG | AGE: 22

A recent Public Relations graduate, Makhosemvelo joined FLAC to expand her knowledge on feminism and navigate the contradictions between culture and feminist concepts. She's interning with the Soul City communications team and plans to create a safe space for young girls in her community, focusing on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and academic support.

Highlight: Building relationships with young women from across South Africa and learning from their diverse experiences.



GENEVA THUTLOANE KANANA

KLEKSDORP, NOUTH WEST | AGE: 18

The youngest fellow, Geneva, has always wanted to empower young women and girls. She sees feminism as the power to stand up and create a better world. Geneva started the "DO IT YOURSELF" social club, where members engage in discussions and projects that raise awareness on various issues.

Highlight: The fellowship has increased her hunger for learning and activism, inspiring her to pursue further studies in leadership and feminism.



PHATHEKA KHANYA SINEKE

NTABANKULU, EASTERN CAPE | AGE: 23

Phatheka Sineke joined FLAC with a desire to see how her peers from different parts of South Africa live and behave. Initially unsure of what to expect, she found the programme to be a journey of self-awareness and growth. For Phatheka, feminism means advocating for equal rights and ensuring that women receive the same treatment as men, without compromising human rights in the process. Her project focuses on uplifting and empowering young people, not just women. She identifies those in need of assistance with applications to higher education institutions, in-service training, and internships, helping them navigate these often challenging processes.

Highlight: FLAC has taught Phatheka the importance of speaking up, asking for help, and understanding that being different is not something to be ashamed of. She's learned to draw boundaries and recognise the impact she can have by offering assistance to others.





HLUMELA DLALI COFIMVABA

EASTERN CAPE, COFIMVABA | Age: 26

Hlumela, who uses they/them pronouns, applied to FLAC because of their passion for social justice and activism. They believe feminism is about inclusivity, leadership, and liberation. Hlumela is working on empowering young people through education and awareness about their rights, particularly within their newly founded Rise Club.

Highlight: Understanding the complexities of gender and sexuality within the feminist movement has been eye-opening.

REARABETSWE MOKOTLA PIMVILLE

SOWETO, GAUTENG | Age: 23

Rearabetswe joined FLAC to learn about feminism and gain leadership skills. She's developing a multicultural group for young boys and girls, promoting equality and freedom of choice. Currently interning with the Soul City communications team, she's discovered a passion for writing and is considering studying communication science.

Highlight: The sisterhood and shared experiences within FLAC have made the programme especially meaningful.



PALESA MOKWA

BLOEMFONTEIN, FREE STATE | Age: 26

Palesa's project focuses on pushing young women to unlearn stereotypes associated with womanhood. She's passionate about bringing practical change to her community and aligning her teaching degree with her feminist activism.

Highlight: Being surrounded by passionate young women from across South Africa who share her vision for change.



NONHLANHLA MAGWAZA NDWEDWE

NDWEDWE, KWAZULU-NATAL | Age: 2

Already familiar with social justice work, Nonhlanhla joined FLAC to deepen her knowledge of feminism. She's currently sharing information about adolescent and youth-friendly services in her community and schools.

Highlight: The programme has allowed her to be herself and embrace the opportunities for growth within FLAC.



NTOKOSO NOXOLO PHUMELELE NGWENYA

VOSLOORUS, GAUTENG | Age: 26

Ntokozo sees feminism as liberation from oppressive past experiences. She's taken on the challenge of starting her own club and hopes to influence SRHR services and perceptions. Ntokozo's host organisation is the African Gender Institute, where she's absorbing knowledge and building a network.

Highlight: FLAC has transformed her outlook on life, opening her eyes to new perspectives.



MAMOKETE ROSE BOFELO BOPHELONG

BOPHELONG, GAUTENG | Age: 25

Mamokete is passionate about social change and reshaping her feminism. Her project involves creating safe spaces for young women to share their experiences, particularly regarding gender-based violence.

Highlight: The resources and mentorship provided by FLAC have expanded her feminism and leadership skills.



KARABO PRECIOUS LEFIFI

GA-RANKUWA, GAUTENG | Age: 22



Karabo joined FLAC to empower herself as a woman and find a safe space to voice her concerns. She views feminism as a fight for equality and a tool to break down stereotypes. Her project focuses on empowering women to be independent by helping them connect with potential investors and establish their business ideas.

Highlight: The programme has provided Karabo with a safe space to overcome societal difficulties and build her feminist journey. Her host organisation, the African Gender Institute, is helping her gain the knowledge and resources she needs to advance her cause.

AMOGELANG-BONTLE LEEUW

BLOEMFONTEIN, FREE STATE | Age: 21

Bontle's journey with FLAC began when she saw an Instagram ad that resonated with her long-held feminist beliefs. She views feminism as creating a world where women can unapologetically speak out and strive for liberation in all aspects of life. Bontle's project involves working with Save the Children, focusing on children's rights and SRHR.

Highlight: Learning about intersectionality and African feminism has been transformative for Bontle, challenging her preconceived notions and expanding her understanding of feminism.



JADEAN WRIGHT

WENTWORTH, KWAZULU NATAL | Age: 21



Jadean, a young woman who has faced discrimination based on her appearance, applied to FLAC to find comfort in her own skin. She believes feminism is about being free in your own identity and having equal opportunities regardless of gender. Jadean's project focuses on empowering youth to reach their full potential through a safe space that fosters personal growth.

Highlight: The unity, growth, and knowledge gained from FLAC have been pivotal for Jadean. She chose the Institute of Afrikology for her placement to deepen her understanding of her roots and advance in the social cohesion field.

MAPOLOKWANE DOLLY NAWA

POLOKWANE, LIMPOPO | Age: 26

Dolly applied to FLAC to learn how to dismantle patriarchy and achieve self-determination in her community. She views feminism as advocating for gender equality and women's rights. Her current project involves teaching young boys and girls beading and knitting as tools to spark social justice conversations from an early age.

Highlight: The fellowship has equipped Dolly with the knowledge and skills to lead change in her community.



MALEHLOHONOLO MANKO

BLOEMANDA, NORTHERN CAPE | AGE: 21

Intrigued by the feminism space, Malehlohonolo applied to FLAC to advance her leadership skills. To her, feminism is about fighting for the rights of marginalised groups. Her project focuses on eradicating period poverty through advocacy and menstrual health education.

Highlight: Being introduced to her mentor, who has been instrumental in helping her turn her vision into reality, has been a major highlight for Malehlohonolo. She hopes to use the connections she's built to advance her project and her career in the development field.



ANEEQA "KNICKS" ABRAHAMS

MITCHELLS PLAIN, WESTERN CAPE | AGE: 26

Knicks joined FLAC to find her voice as an intersectional feminist. She believes feminism is a dynamic concept that evolves with each person's experiences. Her project aims to provide psychoeducation to young men of colour in prison, helping them reconstruct their identities and challenge traditional notions of masculinity.

Highlight: The connections Knicks has made with other feminists and the educational sessions have been invaluable. Her host organisation, Restore, aligns with her goal of challenging the narrative around masculinity and gender roles in society.



HOPE PITSE

MABOPANE, GAUTENG | Age: 23

Hope's curiosity and drive to seize every opportunity led her to FLAC. She sees feminism as embracing your identity and making decisions that align with your values. Her project focuses on providing tutoring and basic training to high school learners, benefiting both students and the community.

Highlight: The fellowship has helped Hope gain confidence in advocating for feminism and has deepened her understanding of her own identity. She is currently gaining practical experience at Lesedi La Batho Community Centre, an organisation that resonates with her passion for education.



LIBONGWE SHWANE

KHAYELITSHA, WESTEN CAPE | AGE: 21

Libongwe applied to FLAC to gain a deeper understanding of feminism beyond what she's heard from others. For her, feminism is about being radical in her beliefs and advocating for equality in all aspects of life. She is in the process of starting a young girls' club to bring positive light to feminism in religious and cultural spaces.

Highlight: The programme has transformed Libongwe's way of thinking, expanding her knowledge and empowering her to reach new spaces with her feminist ideas.

FUNDILE "ZOE" MNGOMEZULU

OURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL | AGE: 23

Zoe joined FLAC to learn more about feminism and gain confidence as a young black woman questioning inequality. Initially intimidated by the concept of feminism, Zoe now proudly identifies as a feminist. Her project involves creating a YouTube documentary series highlighting the challenges young women face and showcasing community efforts to improve lives.

Highlight: The programme has been an eye-opening journey for Zoe, filled with new knowledge and connections with other inspiring young women. She's now applying what she's learned to empower young women in her community and build her project.







What it means to be an Afro-feminist:

In the evolving discourse of feminism, Afro-feminism stands out as a crucial movement that addresses the unique experiences of 'black' women. Rooted in the intersectionality of race, gender, and other identities, Afro-feminism aims to dismantle the systemic oppressions that affect 'black' women uniquely. This blog post delves into the essence of Afro-feminism, its historical context, and its key principles.

By Aneeqa Abahams

Afro-feminism is deeply intertwined with the broader history of the feminist movement and the civil rights struggle. Historically, Black women have been marginalised within the predominantly White feminist movements and overlooked in the mainstream civil rights movements led by men. Figures like Sojourner Truth, with her iconic “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech, highlighted the dual burden of racism and sexism faced by Black women. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of the Black feminist movement with the emergence of groups like the Combahee River Collective, which explicitly addressed the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

The core principles of Afro-feminism are located in the following:

- **Intersectionality:** Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a foundational concept in Afro-feminism. It recognises that the overlapping identities of race, gender, sexuality, and class create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. Afro-feminism insists that feminist discourse must consider these intersections to fully address the lived experiences of Black women.
- **Identity and representation:** Afro-feminism emphasises the importance of representation in all spheres of life, from media to politics. It seeks to challenge and change the stereotypes and monolithic portrayals of Black women, advocating for diverse and authentic representations.
- **Empowerment and autonomy:** Central to Afro-feminism is the empowerment of Black women. This involves advocating for their rights and opportunities and fostering a sense of autonomy and self-worth. Afro-feminism encourages Black women to define their narratives and make decisions free from societal pressures and expectations.
- **Community and solidarity:** Afro-feminism values the power of community and collective action. It recognizes the strength found in solidarity among Black women and other marginalised groups. This principle extends to creating supportive networks that uplift and advocate for one another.

In today’s context, Afro-feminism is more relevant than ever. The #BlackLivesMatter movement, co-founded by three Black womxn, is a testament to the power of Black feminist

activism. The movement not only addresses police brutality and systemic racism but also highlights the need to consider gender and other intersecting identities in these struggles.

Afro-feminism also plays a crucial role in cultural conversations. With the rise of social media, Black womxn have found platforms to voice their experiences and challenge dominant narratives. From calling out cultural appropriation to celebrating natural hair and body positivity, Afro-feminism is reshaping cultural norms and standards of beauty.

Like any movement, Afro-feminism faces its own set of challenges and criticisms. Some argue that it can sometimes be too exclusive, focusing primarily on the experiences of Black womxn in Western contexts and overlooking those from other regions. Additionally, there are internal debates about the best strategies to achieve the movement’s goals, reflecting the diversity of thought within the community.

Afro-feminism is not just a movement but a celebration of Black womxnhood. It acknowledges the struggles while honouring Black womxn’s resilience, creativity, and contributions throughout history and today. Celebrating Afro-feminism means recognising the achievements of Black women in various fields, from the arts and sciences to politics and social justice.

Afro-feminism is a vital and dynamic part of the feminist landscape. By centering the experiences of Black womxn and embracing the complexity of intersectionality, it offers a more inclusive vision of feminism. As we move forward, Afro-feminism principles will continue to guide us towards a more equitable and just society for all.



Amile and Ahlume Yenge

By Bongekile Macupe

Identical Twins Championing Feminism Together

‘Our peers think we are weird or too opinionated for having feminist views,’ says teenage twins.

Amile and Ahlume Yenge, twins, were 12 when they stumbled around the concept of feminism. They are now 18.

The twins, who hail from Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal, had already picked up the imbalance between men and women from an early age, but they did not have the language to express it.

Amile says they then began immersing themselves in research about feminism and consumed a lot of material from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to help broaden their knowledge. They watched her TED Talks and read whatever literature on feminism she had to offer.

“For us, she put into perspective what feminism is all about, and that it is not about favouring one gender over the other, but it is basically about bringing a balance between the two genders,” says Amile.

The twins say Ngozi Adichie’s work helped them strengthen their resolve. They learned that there was nothing wrong with not subscribing to societal norms and that “it is okay to speak out against those belief systems.”

Amile says they have felt liberated over the years and no longer worry that they will be called “bitter” because they are feminists. This has not always been easy, and at times, they admit, they stifled their views out of the fear of being labelled as hating men or being bitter.

“But when I listened to Chimamanda, she empowered me to boldly identify as a feminist without the fear of being labelled bitter and that

I have my opinion and I am standing up for what I feel is right,” she says.

The twins say they have not found it easy to navigate their feminism with their peers and at school. This is because they believe their age-mates do not see issues of gender equality as “important”.

“So, they always see us as weird or people who like challenging things. But I also think it comes from a place of not being informed, which is why that’s their attitude. They view us as being bitter. So it is quite difficult navigating being a feminist with our peers,” says Ahlume.

At school, they often have to navigate an environment with different expectations for boys and girls.

And they have to deal with comments such as: ‘You behave very badly for a girl,’ and I always think, ‘What’s that supposed to mean?’” says Ahlume.

Ahlume also remembers an incident that irked her, where nurses from a local clinic came to the school to talk to “only the girls” about sex, family planning, and STIs. But boys were never called to the hall to listen to the talk.



Later, the boys talked differently with a contestant from Mr South Africa and someone from BMW. In that talk, they were told about being a man and how to build yourself up and become a better man.

“So I thought, ‘So we get family planning, and the boys get Mr South Africa,’ and it is situations like that make me uncomfortable or reiterate our belief about the imbalance,” she says.

Amile believes that her beliefs might change in the future. As she grows up and comes to terms with the

“reality of things,” she might have different belief systems. But that is not the case for Ahlume.

“I don’t think my beliefs will ever change. If we continue to have conversations like these about the feminist agenda, even if it’s in small strides, we will make some progress in changing these long-held beliefs about men and women.

“For me, feminism is not ‘if/or’, but it is just who I am, and I don’t think I will ever change,” says Ahlume.

“ So they always see us as weird or people who like challenging things. ”



Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech: A perspective from a young South African woman



Growing up in South Africa, I have always been fascinated by the rapid technological advancements shaping our world. Yet, as a young woman navigating this landscape, I quickly became aware of a persistent gender gap in tech-related fields. The disparity, however, is not unique to South Africa; it is a global phenomenon. However, the challenges and opportunities in South Africa are uniquely intertwined with our socio-economic and cultural context.

By Jadean Wright

The current landscape

The tech industry in South Africa is booming and driven by innovations in fintech, telecommunications, and digital services. Yet, women remain underrepresented in these sectors. According to a 2021 Women in Tech ZA report, women hold 23% of tech jobs in South Africa.

This imbalance is rooted in historical, socio-cultural, and educational factors that have long hindered women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

The importance of digital literacy

Digital literacy is more than just a skill; it is a lifeline to the future. For women, acquiring digital skills can open doors to higher-paying jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities, and more significant societal influence. However, many girls in South Africa face significant barriers to accessing quality education and digital resources. These barriers include limited access to the internet, lack of women role models in tech, and societal expectations that discourage girls from pursuing STEM careers.

Education initiatives are making a difference.

Several initiatives are working tirelessly to bridge this gap. For instance, the GirlCode initiative offers young women coding boot camps and hackathons, providing them with the skills and confidence to thrive in the tech industry. Similarly, TechnoGirl is a public-private partnership that identifies talented girls from disadvantaged backgrounds and places them in tech companies' job shadowing and internship programs.

One notable success story is that of She Leads Africa, an organisation that not only teaches tech skills but also fosters entrepreneurship among young women. She Leads Africa provides training in coding, digital marketing, and business development, and empowers women to create opportunities in the digital economy.

Personal reflections

As a participant in one of these programs, I have experienced firsthand the transformative power of digital literacy. Learning to code has expanded my career prospects and reshaped my self-confidence. I now see technology not as a male-dominated field but as an open playground where I can innovate and lead.

The road ahead

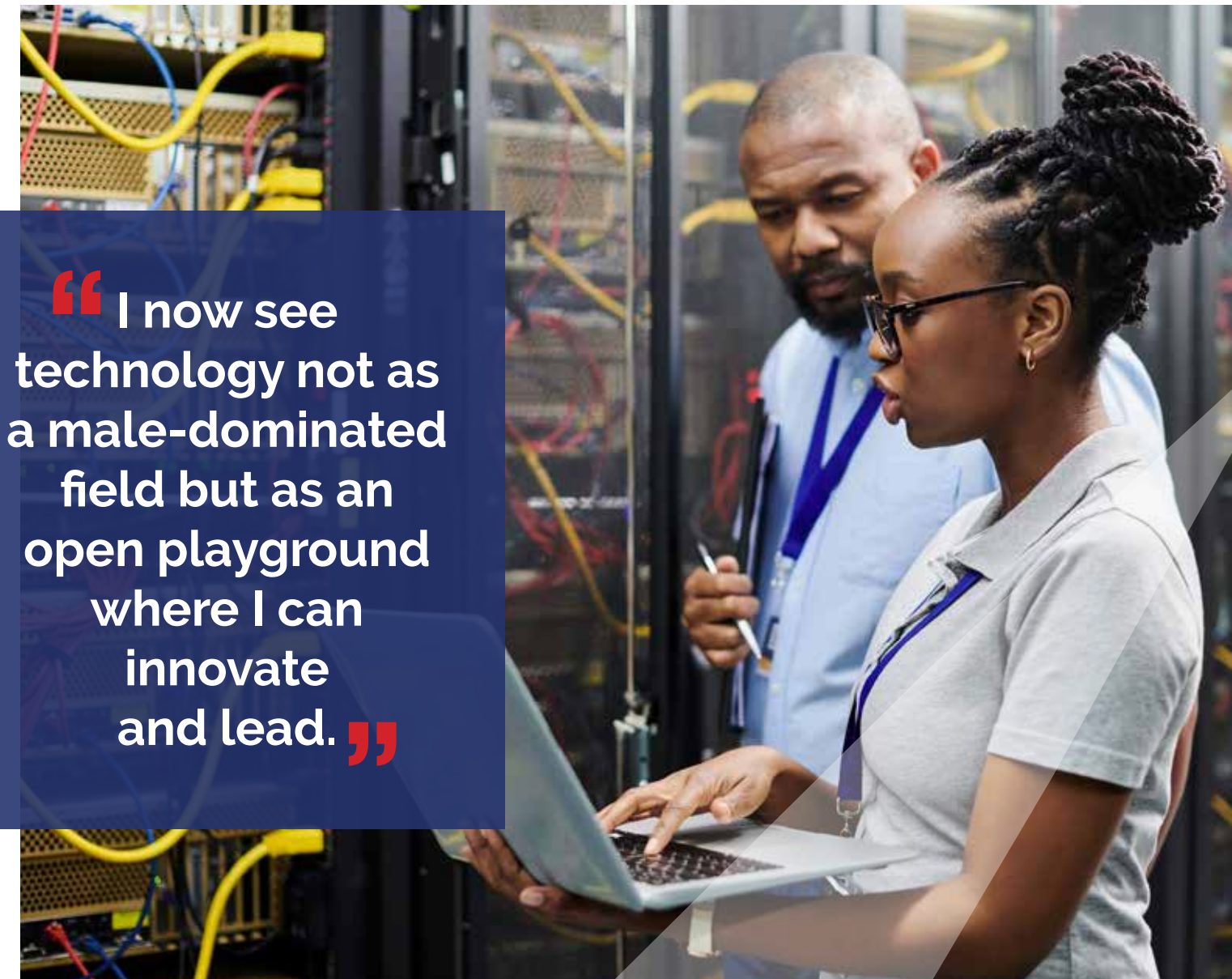
While these initiatives are a step in the right direction, more must be done to ensure equitable participation.

And ways to do that can include:

1. **Enhanced Curriculum:** Integrate coding and digital literacy into the school curriculum from an early age to normalise these skills among girls.
2. **Community Support:** Create community centres with internet access and digital training resources, particularly in rural areas.
3. **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship networks that connect young women with female tech leaders, providing guidance and inspiration.

4. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for policies that support gender equality in education and the workplace, ensuring that tech companies commit to diversity and inclusion.

Bridging the gender gap in tech is not merely a matter of fairness but an economic imperative. Empowering women with digital skills ensures they can fully participate in and contribute to the digital economy. As a young woman in South Africa, I am hopeful that with continued effort and collaboration, we can create a future where every girl has the opportunity to explore, innovate, and lead in the world of technology. The journey is challenging, but the destination promises a more inclusive and dynamic digital landscape for all.



“ I now see technology not as a male-dominated field but as an open playground where I can innovate and lead. ”

‘FEMINISM HAS EXISTED IN ISLAM FOR A VERY LONG TIME’

says Zaharah Msomi, a young, black, Muslim feminist

When she was in Matric, Zaharah Msomi doubted if she wanted to be Muslim. “I felt that I was in a conflicting world with some ideals that I held, with feminism being one of them; I felt that they were clashing with religion,” she says. It was the early years of her feminist journey, and she also believed she was doing things that were “very un-Islamic”.

For example, at the Muslim high school she attended, girls were told that they needed to aspire to be stay-at-home moms, or if they wanted careers, they should become teachers because that is the profession that would allow them to balance being a mother and wifely duties. “I never wanted to become a teacher, and I was very upset about the entire thing,” she says.

Msomi, 23, who lives in Johannesburg, is currently doing her pupillage. It was doing her own research about her religion that opened her eyes and deepened her curiosity towards her religion. “I found a quote by one Islamic figure, his name is Imam Ali, and it said, ‘You need to learn your religion and not inherit it.’ And I felt at that point in time I had inherited my religion from my parents, and I had never gone to the point of researching whether it was really something that I wanted for myself. And so I did exactly that. I started researching whether I really wanted it,” she says.

In her research, she discovered that many iconic Muslim women played an integral role in the Islamic faith and were a “great example of feminism” within Islam. Her research, says Msomi, helped her understand that “Feminism has existed in Islam for a very long time.”

“Prophet Muhammed’s wife was a businesswoman, richer than him, older than him, and she owned so much more than him, and he was very supportive and accepting of who she was. So, the mother of Islam herself is a feminist icon, and her husband allowed her to exist the way that she wanted to.”

“When you research about one of his daughters, Fatima–Fatima is a great feminist icon as well. So I was like, no way, these women were great, and they were allowed to exist the way they wanted to at that point in time’. So, there is no way where I can find myself saying my faith is not in line with feminism. So I am a feminist, and my Islam does make space for me to be a feminist as well,” says Msomi.

She adds, however, that it is hard to operate as a feminist in the Muslim faith and that you get given labels as someone who wants to change the religion or who is too modern. “And it is not just among men; there are a lot of women within this religion that have internalised patriarchy. And so, for them, it is not normal for women to question or to want change and progress.

“What is normal and fine is for a woman to want to see her place as a wife; what is normal is for a woman to aspire to become a mother. Even now, when I tell people I currently have no aspirations of becoming a mother or to find myself as a housewife, it is still very problematic for them to comprehend,” she says.

But she has been encouraged by “progressive Muslim men” who understand how Islam is feministic and who themselves also identify as feminists. She says it is one of the most remarkable things to witness, albeit very rare.

“YOU NEED TO LEARN YOUR RELIGION AND NOT INHERIT IT!”

Her message to young Muslim girls and women who are feminists is that they need to own their truth and not allow themselves to be swayed from their belief system.

“No matter how many people can be against you, it is better that you die standing tall than on your knees begging for someone to spare your life because you would rather change what you believe in than stand for it,” says Msomi.



CASTING A FEMINIST VOTE

It is a thorn to some and a lifetime victory to others. The ability to choose or not to, depending on a woman’s basic needs and what she thinks and feels, is due to her, but above all, to being present and included in every milestone of that process.

Others have always measured women’s capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses, and some have been oppressed mentally and psychologically to this day.

“

Casting a feminist vote means there is more to a woman than her surroundings, and her voice is just as important even in how her country is governed.

”

By Palesa Mokwa

HER

ENDING FEMICIDE

South Africa has become a playground for femicide, and the number of women murdered keeps increasing. **In 2021, the number of women who have been murdered rose from 10 to 13 per 100,000** – according to the latest crime statistics.

These statistics call for an active justice system.

In some cases, the murders are not reported to the police because family members of the murdered women are discouraged by how the perpetrators end up on the streets, anyway, having just spent a few hours in a jail cell.

There are enough issues in relationships, and some say “love is blind,” but we need a justice system that is sound enough to know that love cannot be a scapegoat for abuse.

We need a **justice system** that is **committed to protecting women and dealing with perpetrators** to keep the femicide rates down.

ADD

DESTROYING PERIOD POVERTY

Reports say seven million South African girls are absent from school each month because they lack sanitary pads. Poverty and a harsh economic climate mean that many women and girls cannot afford to buy sanitary pads.

There are dire consequences to **girls missing out of school because of lack of pads**, and these include missing out on crucial lessons, tests, and exams. There have been calls that pads must be provided for free in schools, just like how condoms are accessible to ensure lower rates of HIV/Aids as well as sexually transmitted diseases.

Menstruation is a natural journey of every girl's life and needs to be treated with priority and dignity.

SAME WORK, SAME PAY

It is a sad reality that, to this day, women have to advocate for the fact that they deserve the same pay as men for the work they do.

According to a study conducted on the SA-TIED programme, in 2021, **women earned 78 cents for every rand men earned.**

Gender equality must be visible even in pay, and it is disheartening to find statistics that still speak of women earning less than men because of their gender.

“
[South Africa]...
a playground for
femicide.”

SAY!



CONCLUSION

The issues mentioned above are why the feminist vote is essential. Voting, especially for issues that champion women's rights, can end campaigns that plead for free sanitary pads, femicide, and gender-gap pay. **Casting a feminist vote is more than just a political statement; it is personal.**



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: OPPORTUNITIES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REMOTE WORK

By: Jadean Wright

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is revolutionising industries and reshaping society, offering unprecedented opportunities for women to achieve economic empowerment. With advancements in artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, and digital platforms, the 4IR presents a unique moment for women to break barriers and redefine their roles in the global economy. This era opens up new avenues for entrepreneurship and remote work, providing fertile ground for feminist progress.

Bridging the gender gap with technology

Historically, women have faced systemic obstacles to economic participation, from unequal access to education and resources to pervasive gender biases in the workplace. However, the advent of 4IR technologies is levelling the playing field. Digital tools and platforms democratise access to knowledge and resources, enabling women to overcome traditional hurdles.



For instance, online learning platforms offer flexible, affordable education, allowing women to acquire in-demand technology, business, and beyond skills. Coding boot camps, digital marketing courses, and AI certifications are just a few examples of how women can gain expertise from the comfort of their homes. Access to education is critical in preparing women for high-paying roles in tech and other fields.

Fostering female entrepreneurship

4IR has significantly lowered the barriers to entry for aspiring entrepreneurs. Digital marketplaces, social media, and e-commerce platforms give women the tools to start and scale their businesses with minimal initial investment. These platforms enable women to reach global audiences, access diverse markets, and engage directly with customers.

Women-led startups are increasingly visible in the tech sector, bringing innovative solutions to market.

These enterprises contribute to economic growth and challenge gender norms, proving that women can thrive as leaders and innovators. The rise of fintech solutions, such as mobile banking and micro-financing apps, further supports female entrepreneurs by providing easier access to capital, traditionally a major hurdle for many women.

Transforming remote work

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, highlighting its potential to enhance work-life balance and reduce gender disparities in employment. Remote work is particularly beneficial for women, who often juggle professional responsibilities with caregiving roles. Remote work allows women to participate more fully in the workforce by eliminating the need for commuting and offering flexible schedules. Moreover, remote work opens up opportunities in regions where local job markets may be limited, enabling women to engage in high-paying, skilled jobs regardless of their geographical location. This shift can be particularly transformative in developing countries, where traditional employment opportunities for women may be scarce.

Building Inclusive Digital Economies

Building inclusive digital economies is crucial to fully harnessing 4IR's potential for women's economic empowerment.

This involves ensuring equal access to digital infrastructure, fostering digital literacy, and addressing the gender digital divide.

Governments, private sector entities, and civil society must collaborate to provide underserved communities with affordable internet access and digital tools.

Policies and programs promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are also essential. Encouraging girls to pursue education and careers in these fields early can cultivate a new generation of women leaders in tech. Mentoring and networking opportunities can help women overcome professional barriers and advance their careers.

A call to action

The 4IR presents a pivotal opportunity to redefine economic empowerment for women. By embracing digital tools, fostering entrepreneurship, and advocating for inclusive policies, we can create a future where women are not just participants but leaders in the global economy.

As we navigate this transformative era, it is imperative to prioritize gender equality and ensure that the benefits of 4IR are accessible to all. Empowering women economically is not just a feminist goal; it is essential for sustainable development and global prosperity. Let us seize this moment to build a more equitable world where women have the power to shape their destinies and drive the future of innovation.



FEMINISM THOUGHT ACROSS GENERATIONS: FROM GRANDMOTHERS' WISDOM TO DAUGHTERS' BOLDNESS

Grandmothers: Guardians of tradition and beacons of strength

Imagine sitting under the shade of a thorn tree, surrounded by grandmothers with laughter lines etched into their faces like maps of resilience. These matriarchs carry within them the stories of struggle and triumph, the whispers of resistance that echo through the ages.

Their feminism is rooted in the soil of tradition, nourished by the wisdom of ancestors who understood the power of unity and community. They wielded their strength like a shield, protecting their families and dignity in adversity.

From the rural homesteads to the bustling townships, these grandmothers are the unsung heroines of South African feminism. Their quiet acts of defiance paved the way for future generations to thrive.

Mothers: Warriors of liberation and architects of change

Shift the scene to the streets of Soweto, where mothers march with fists raised high, their voices echoing the chants of freedom and justice. These are the women who stood shoulder to shoulder with their brothers in the struggle against apartheid, demanding equality and dignity for all.

Their feminism is fierce and unyielding, forged in the crucible of resistance and tempered by the fires of injustice. They fought for political liberation and economic empowerment, recognising that true freedom cannot exist without economic justice.

In the halls of power and the corridors of activism, these mothers carved out spaces for themselves and their daughters, challenging patriarchal structures and reshaping the narrative of what it means to be a woman in South Africa.

Daughters: Trailblazers of tomorrow and architects of hope

Enter the daughters, the torchbearers of a new era of South African feminism. Born into a democracy but still grappling with the legacies of the past, they refuse to be defined by the constraints of history.

Their feminism is intersectional and inclusive, embracing the diversity of identities and experiences that make up the rainbow nation. They harness the power of social media and digital activism to amplify their voices and mobilise communities in the fight for gender equality.

From the classrooms to the boardrooms, these daughters are breaking barriers and challenging stereotypes, envisioning a future where every woman and girl can thrive without fear of discrimination or violence.

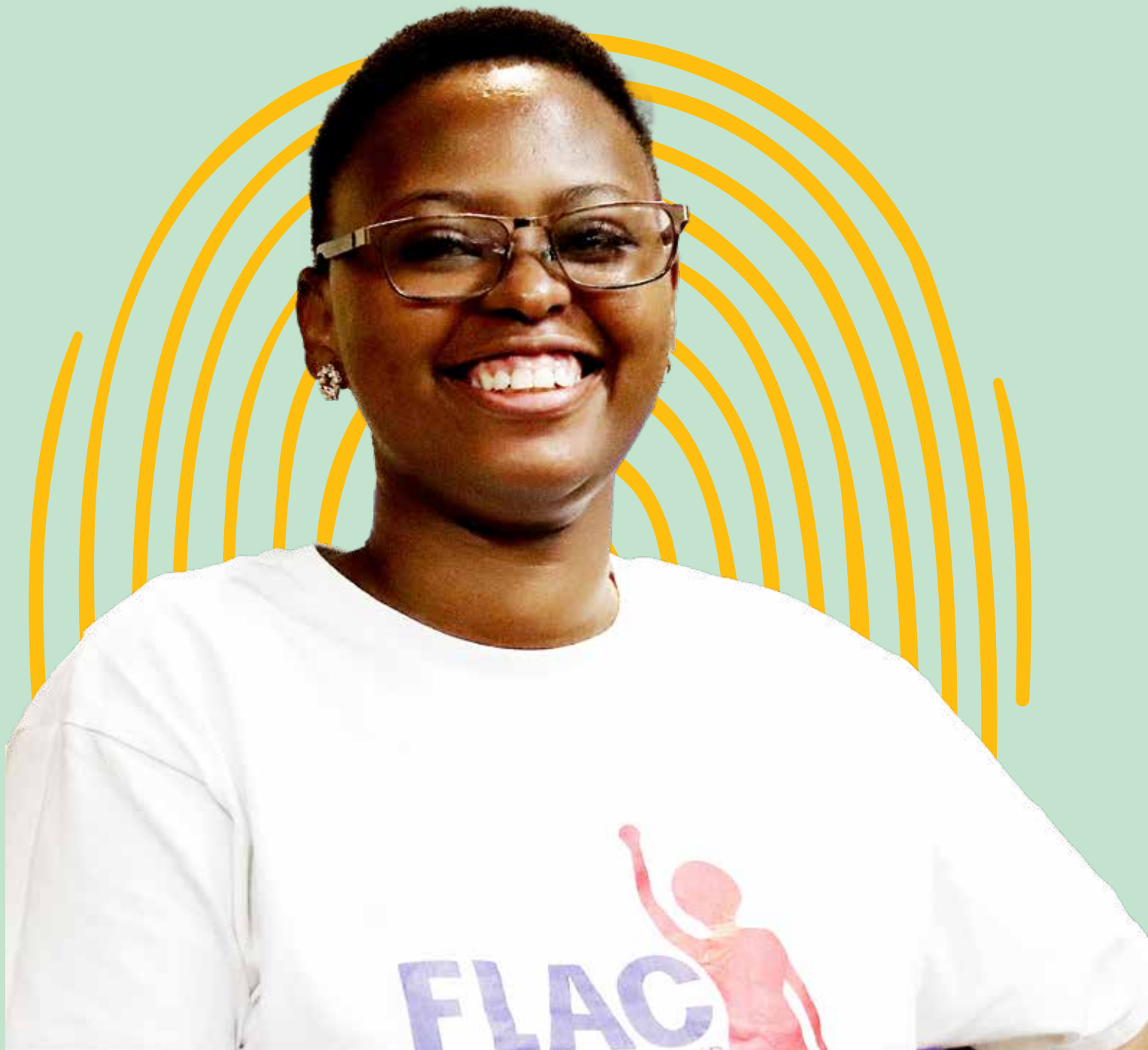
Bridging the Generational Divide: Lessons learned and legacies shared

As we reflect on the rich tapestry of South African feminism across generations, we uncover a wealth of lessons learned and legacies shared. Each generation brings its unique perspective, but together, they form a continuum of resistance, resilience, and renewal.

The grandmothers remind us to honour our roots while challenging the norms that hold us back. The mothers inspire us with their courage and determination to build a better future for themselves and their children. And the daughters embolden us with their vision and creativity, showing us that change is possible and inevitable when we stand together as one.

Ultimately, South African feminism is not just a movement—it's a living, breathing testament to women's power to shape their destinies and transform the world around them. As we pass the torch from one generation to the next, let us carry forward the lessons of the past, the dreams of the present, and the hopes for a future where all are equal, all are empowered, and all are free to be their authentic selves.

By NTOKOZO NGWENYA





"I'm really conscious and deliberate about raising her to be a feminist, raising her to be independent, and above all, I'm not raising a sweet kid because I feel like we were raised to be these sweet, agreeable girls."

“I AM NOT RAISING A SWEET GIRL”

SAYS HUMAN RIGHTS FEMINIST THANDEKILE MOYO, ON RAISING A FEMINIST DAUGHTER.

By Bongekile Macupe

For most of her adult life, Thandekile Moyo did not identify as a feminist. But once she did, she realised that she had always been one. Moyo, who hails from Zimbabwe but lives in Pretoria, says that before she owned her feminism, she had to include a disclaimer that “I’m not a feminist” when raising her views.

“But then, I got comfortable and knowledgeable, and the more I became knowledgeable on the subject, then that’s when I realised ‘No, I am a feminist’. And so I think I have always been, but I just had no idea exactly what feminism is,” she says.

Now, Moyo is raising a daughter, Grace, who is 12, and says she is unashamedly raising a feminist daughter. She knows that Grace, who lives in Zimbabwe with her parents, will grow up and form her own ideas, but she has deliberately raised her as a feminist. “I’m really conscious and deliberate about raising her to be a feminist, raising her to be independent, and above all, I’m not raising a sweet kid because I feel like we were raised to be these sweet, agreeable girls.

“Like, you know, a girl must not be too vocal because you’re a problem, blah, blah. **So I’m conscious about making sure I tell her to speak out and let her voice be heard,**” says Moyo. She also encourages Grace to call her out “if I’m being a problem to her in any way” and says this has helped with having an open line of communication between mother and daughter and an outlet to talk about anything.

According to Moyo, Grace is vocal about injustices, not only those affecting women, and her mother says she can proudly say she is a **“feminist in the making.”** Grace has strong views, for example, on the issues of the LGBTQ+ community and often making statements such as: **“If someone is gay, it’s got nothing to do with you, and you just need to respect people”.** “And I love that,” says Moyo.

Grace attends her mother’s work engagements, and Moyo says she has again been deliberate in doing this to expose her daughter to the work of other human rights and feminist activists.

Also, she believes that if the organisations she works with claim to be feminist organisations, they need to understand that they work with mothers.

“So when I’m invited to places, and I know I can take Grace with or like when I was in Kenya on the invitation of Ford Foundation as their fellow, and Ford Foundation is a feminist organisation, I told them that my daughter and I live apart and such things are opportunities for me to be with her,” shares Moyo.

“So, can I bring her? They’ll be like, “Great, you can bring her””

Moyo says she believes Grace’s exposure to her work has upped her level of understanding about things. It is not just hearing things from her mother; she has been exposed to them and heard from people from different walks of life. “She’s attended conferences. Last year, we went to this film festival on gender-based violence. So she is exposed,” says Moyo.

She thinks that even though Grace might not be able to articulate that she is a feminist, she has to conscientise her, and maybe when she grows up, she can call herself a feminist. “I actually think that she actually is a feminist because even when you talk to her, her thoughts about boys and girls, her ideas about, you know, these gender roles and stuff, she doesn’t subscribe to any of that stuff at all,” says Moyo.

Moyo is also grateful that her daughter is living with her parents, especially her father.

“I think my dad is a feminist too or a feminist ally. I think the reason why I was never consciously a feminist is because I never knew women were oppressed because I was never oppressed as a woman or as a girl at home.

“I had no idea until I met other people, and I understood the dynamics of other families [that some women are oppressed]. My dad was always like, ‘You can do whatever you want’. So that is why I think he is a feminist, and I am happy Grace is living with them,” says Moyo. She adds that a lot of internalised misogyny comes from home, and is glad that even when her daughter is not with her, there is not any of that.

Moyo hopes for her daughter that she grows up to be confident and authentic, so that whatever she experiences, whether good or bad, is not because she has been pushed into it.

EFFECTIVE

by Geneva Tlutloane Kanana

When we talk about feminism, we talk about creating a world or future where women's voices are heard.

A world where there's equality between the two sexes,
a world free of sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression.

When we talk about advocacy in feminism, we mean any action that speaks in favour of women while supporting and defending them or pleads on their behalf against any oppression and unfairness.

Effective feminist advocacy means the success of reaching the goal where women no longer feel excluded. Their voices, opinions, thoughts, and feelings are finally heard. They can also express themselves freely.

Does this apply only to women?

No, it includes every other person, including the LGBTQI+ community, expressing themselves and living their sexuality without being judged, abused or killed.

Effective feminism/ advocacy means reaching a point where everyone is heard and given a chance to finally be what they want to be without being told they can't based on how they look or the life they live.

This means a woman can be president of a country. We need a world that will not limit anyone's abilities and talents.

We need a world that creates opportunities for everyone—a just and fair world in which many people can show what they are made of or capable of.

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THE ROLE YOUNG WOMXN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS PLAY IN A TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIETY

By Rearabetswe Mokotla

As a FLAC Fellow, I've had the honour of working with other young womxn from different backgrounds, and I've seen their incredible potential to make a positive impact. One of the most impressive things about their leadership is their ability to unite people, regardless of age or background.

I have witnessed how these young womxn share unique perspectives and experiences, creating innovative solutions to tackle the world's complex problems. I have also been inspired by how they are redefining leadership by demonstrating that leadership is not just titles or power but about making a difference in your community.

These young women are leading by example and proving that even small actions can have a big impact.

As we look to the future, it's clear that young womxn and girls will drive progress. They're already shaping our world, and it's our responsibility to support and amplify their efforts. In so doing, we can create a brighter, fairer future for everyone.

Challenging unfair norms

Young womxn and girls are challenging societal norms and fighting for gender equality. They're standing up for their rights, fighting against discrimination, and inspiring others to join the movement. Their activism breaks down barriers and paves the way for a more inclusive and equal society.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

Young womxn and girls are driving innovation and creativity in various fields, from science and technology to social entrepreneurship. They're developing solutions to global problems, creating jobs, and boosting economic growth. Their fresh ideas and perspectives transform industries and communities, creating a better future for all.

Leadership and mentorship

Young womxn and girls are taking on leadership roles, mentoring and supporting each other. They're creating a network of empowerment, lifting each other up, and celebrating successes. Their leadership shows that gender equality is a human right and a necessary step towards a more just and sustainable world.

Cultural exchange and preservation

Young womxn and girls are preserving their cultural heritage, sharing traditions, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. They're building bridges between communities and fostering global citizenship.

Through their cultural exchange and preservation efforts, they're creating a more diverse and inclusive society.

Education and activism

Education is key to empowerment, and young womxn and girls know it. They fight for access to quality education, advocate for their rights, and mobilise for social justice.

Young womxn and girls are the change-makers of today. They are transforming societies, breaking down barriers, and shaping a better future. Let us celebrate, support, and empower them to continue leading the way towards a more just, equal, and sustainable world.





UNPACKING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Dolly

South Africa has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the world. The country's history, culture, and societal structures have contributed to this crisis.

This article explores the root causes of GBV in South Africa, including culture, patriarchy, poverty, and religious beliefs.



Patriarchy

South Africa is a patriarchal society where men hold significant power and privilege. This system perpetuates gender inequality, reinforcing men's dominance over women. Patriarchy creates an environment where men feel entitled to control and dominate women, contributing to GBV.

Church and Religion

Some religious teachings perpetuate harmful gender roles, reinforcing men's authority over women. The notion that "the man is the head of the house" (Ephesians 5:23) has been used to justify male dominance and control. This interpretation perpetuates GBV, as men may feel divinely entitled to assert their power over women.

The phrase "the man is the head of the house" has been used to:

- Justify male dominance and control
- Perpetuate gender-based violence
- Reinforce harmful gender stereotypes
- Limit women's autonomy and agency



Culture

In many African cultures, including those in South Africa, there is a strong emphasis on masculinity and male dominance. Men are often expected to be strong, assertive, and providers, while women are expected to be submissive and nurturing. This cultural narrative perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes, normalizing male aggression and entitlement.





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Published by the Soul City Institute Design, layout and illustrations by Queenzela Mokoena, Sumeya Gasa, and Bramble Mokoena
Photos by Hlengiwe Lesedi Magubane
Editing and Proofreading by Bongekile Macupe

We also thank our FLAC mentors:
Hlanga Mqushulu, Nkeletseng Tsetsane, Kwezilomso Mbandazayo,
Chiara Tiffany Jephtha

Special thanks to our facilitators:
Lindelwe Nxumalo, Kerigo Odada, Dr Mmatshilo Motsei
Yaliwe Clarke, Kwezilomso Mbandazayo, Pontsho Pilane
Akona Anati Zibonti, Itumeleng Letsoala, Thabiso Mathibedi, Phinah Kodisang

**We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Ford Foundation
for their generous funding, which made the successful
implementation of this programme possible.**