

Activist Profiles: Issue 4

By IY Staff

Activist Profile of Life Sithole

By Life Sithole

Life Sithole is a young activist who has always found peace in the world of art. Born on 27 June 2002 in Swaneville, west of Gauteng, he is the youngest of 12 children. Growing up in a community surrounded by crime and poverty life was never easy, but art became my escape.

Life discovered his passion for acting, poetry, drawing, and storytelling at a young age. Joining a local art group at 10. He began performing at school and quickly realising his talent for acting, poetry, and storytelling. He currently works for Young Minds Cohorts, an organisation that teaches kids in the community artistic skills, to escape their realities.

Through this organisation he has had the opportunity to lead plays together with other young people in the organisation they have been awarded a scholarship from Joburg Theatre in partnership with Drama for Life to study at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. This opportunity allowed me to further my studies and pursue my passion for the arts.

Activist Profile of Mzwandile Mokhuane

By Thandi Mkhatswa

Mzwandile Sandile Mokhuane is a 39-year-old male who was born and raised in the Orlando East at Soweto; he lives in Freedom Park, Soweto from the organisation called Abahlali Base Freedom Park. Mzwandile was raised by a single mom who worked as a domestic worker. During his childhood, he has been active at a young age and has participated in many activities such as soccer, drama, traditional dance, and hip-hop (rapping). Mokhuane did gangster rap and conscious rap. During his high school years, he began to organise hip-hop sessions and comedy shows to improve his skills and capacity.

Mokhuane's life of being an activist was influenced by him working in the metal industry firm at Scaw metal and the material conditions. Mzwandile engages with the community through public community meetings and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Though Mokhuane is passionate about issues of land, decent housing and non-exploitative jobs, resolving inequality and education, He finds it difficult to balance his activist life and his personal life but Mokhuane's achievements in his activism is Freedom Park being developed from an informal settlement to a formal settlement.

Southern Farm Mega Housing development identified and occupied building with Wits students. The challenges that Mokhuane faced is a housing backlog and so responded so that they can identify land to be occupied by his community, which is surrounded by factories. Mokhuane's activism is still inspired through reading and working to make social conditions change.

Activist Profile of Bulelwa Klaasen

By Poppy Makhubo

Bulelwa Klaasen (30) is a youth activist and Chairperson of the Grants Committee from Gqeberha who has worked on climate change and just transition with a particular focus on anti-nuclear work in South Africa.

She is the founder of the Siyanqoba Feeding Scheme which has supported many hungry and child-headed families. Klaasen got involved in activism through her mother who was involved in the resistance against an Eskom-proposed Nuclear Powerplant. She is inspired by young people who take charge of their narrative, youth addressing and advocating for social change.

Bulelwa serves on the Eastern Cape Environmental Forum and is part of a group of activists from Earthlife Africa providing advice to the Presidential Climate Commission. She serves on the Water Crisis Committee that is spearheading accountability from the government on the water issues in Nelson Mandela Bay and is a member of a movement called *#the!sh!sReal* that deals with the sewerage that runs through townships.

Bulelwa is passionate about bringing change to her community and continuously works to ensure that the state respects its people by addressing their basic and environmental needs.

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