

## **Activist Profiles**

### **Activist Profile of Mandlenkosi Gcwabaza**

By Nokuthula Ndubane

Mandlenkosi Gcwabaza is a 47-year-old male born and bred in a small village called Sobantu in Pietermaritzburg. Gcwabaza completed his lower education at Russell Primary School then later progressed to Khwezi Secondary School where he matriculated.

Gcwabaza, or Mandla as he is known, played a lot of sports in his youth years, but soccer was his favourite sport. He is still playing the sport and also took up coaching youngsters in his community. The community of Pietermaritzburg is well known for its resistance in the apartheid era. There was a lot of crime in Sobantu village which led to Mandla becoming an activist, he was in a group of young people that helped to fight crime and bring changes in the community, battling rising crime levels. They formed a group to help solve the issues in their community, they started by helping elderly and sick people to get into community clinics in time in case of an emergency.

Mandla is one of the founders of Sakha Ubuntu which was formed in 2010. He is also the coordinator for the youth group. They face many challenges as Sakha Ubuntu since they do not have their own office space, they use churches and sports fields to have meetings and many other activities. They also get criticism from community members.

“A lot inspires me, being an activist gives me so much knowledge and it helps me grow as an individual,” said Mandla. Sakha Ubuntu was once invited to Khanya College where part of the lesson was how to organise and mobilise organisations. Institutions like Khanya College help uneducated people to read and write. Mandla wants to tell young people to read more about solidarity and what it means. Mandla wanted to know how we teach our selves sustainability.

### **Activist Profile of Noluthando Xaba**

By Noluthando Xaba

Noluthando Xaba was born in Pretoria and raised in Ladysmith. She realised her calling for the arts very early in her teens as a high school dancer and choreographer at P.J. Simelane High School and with Fusion dance crew respectively.

With more than 20 years under her belt, Noluthando Xaba is now a decorated actress, poet, singer / songwriter, community activist and life coach.

She co-founded Imbumba Young Solutions in 2011, a community based co-operative dedicated to youth development using creative arts as a medium of engagement. It is here where she fell in love with directing and facilitation.

In 2013 she got a chance to be part of Imvuso Project that gave her an opportunity to go study at the University of Witswatersrand under the flagship of 'Drama for Life'. She was later awarded an internship with Drama for Life theatre company in 2017.

As a director, she has been blessed to work on projects like **'Is My Brain Dead?'** in Rustenburg, North West, and **'Impi Ka Qhawekazi'**, to name but two of many. Xaba then worked with the acclaimed Mtv Shuga foundation as a co-facilitator responsible for training and activations.

In 2022 she got a chance to become part of the play back team that toured different communities and Mines in Kathu, performing for the GBV prevention project.

Early in 2023 Nolutando got a chance to direct and facilitated in a play called **'A Message To The Living'** in Rustenburg. In December 2023 she got a chance to return to Rustenburg to direct another production called 'Seek the Waters.'

Nolutando Xaba was a team leader for a program dedicated to theatre for children administered by Imbumba Young Solutions in collaboration with ASSITEJ.

She is a theatre and drama practitioner working with learners in different organisations. She has been part of the executive team and director at Imbumba Young Solutions for the last 14 years and she also works with Rena le Lona Children Centre in Diepkloof Zone 6.

### **Activist Profile of Albert Houwana**

By Athi Intle Sam

Albert Houwana is a young activist born on 5 May 1992. He was born and raised in Motsaoladi Diepkloof, Soweto. Houwana went to Giyani Primary School and later matriculated at Comprehensive School. He studied IT at PC Business College and holds a Bachelor of Social Axillary, which includes archiving records.

Growing up in Soweto, Houwana was a beneficiary of Rena le Lona, a children arts centre based in Diepkloof. He became an activist to create change in his community and to ensure those who came after him don't experience life as he did growing up.

Houwana is currently a director at PUSH. He says he has not reached his goal of self-realisation as yet but realises that being a director brings him one step closer to achieving his goal. He believes that being equipped with knowledge, practising self-care and remaining humble is what keeps him going. This young director has faced many challenges as an activist in his community, this includes behavioural changes and mental health issues. Houwana lives by these following words "Always seek change and be the change you want to see and the best way to prepare for tomorrow is to do all that is required today"

*This article was submitted as part of the Imbila Yesu publication produced daily for the duration of the Winter School in 2024 (14-20 July 2024). It appeared in Edition 3, released on 17 July 2024. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the author and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*