



WOMANDLA

a YIELD Trust project

Bulawayo young women
community champions share
their work, hopes and dreams.

Womandla

Stories of Bulawayo Women Community Champions

A YIELD Trust Publication



Womandla: Stories of Bulawayo Women Community Champions

Published by YIELD Trust

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Dedication

Here's to strong women. May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them.

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About the Nanomedia Training for Women Community Champions Project

The Nano-media Training for Women Community Champions was a six-week training in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, done by the Youth-led Innovative Engagement with Leadership and Development (YIELD) Trust in partnership with Youth Empowerment and Transformation (YET) Trust.

The training aimed to equip young women active in their communities with critical knowledge and skills on the use of digital nanomedia in conducting campaigns, advocacy, peer mobilising and localised gendered advocacy.

Additionally, the program sought to amplify previously unheard Bulawayo young women's voices through multimedia and digital support.

For this project, "Women Community Champions" were defined as women who are actively involved in developing their local communities, such as but not limited to community organisers, community-based organisation workers and volunteers, GBV and HIV activists, artists, journalists, volunteers,

bloggers, social workers, entrepreneurs, those mentoring others, and individuals with a proven track record of work that has either empowered or brought about any form of change within their communities in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

About The Womandla Book

In our work to create a better world for all, we usually focus on a few individuals who are making a difference. We sometimes forget that for every few individuals on stage or on the podium, there is the silent majority toiling in the background who made it happen. This silent majority is doing important, generous and yet thankless work.

These are the people organising people so they can meet with their local councillors. These are people who are trying to keep young people off the streets. These are people who plant trees without cameras. These are people who repair potholes, and these are people who are trying to use their pen to influence change. These are people who decided to pay for someone else's fees instead of another pair of trendy shoes. They are around us every day. We see them. We often ignore them in pursuit of established names.

This book asks you to pause for a moment, for one sitting and just for an hour or two, and pay attention to these young women in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. They are doing important yet quiet work.

This book is not about the work. It is not about the output of the person. It is about the person. There are no lengthy texts here explaining how one is doing their work – we already have that on the 'Youth Conversations by YIELD Trust' YouTube channel – here, we want you to meet the person behind the work.

There are thirteen biographies here, representing a thousand or perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives touched. Read them. Know their names. And if you are in a position to do so, support them.

The stories were collected via an interview-style using WhatsApp. It was a long hard process that involved transcribing, editing and processing. Now we are happy to share them with you.

I hope they inspire you to see those we are trained to ignore.

More importantly, I hope they inspire you to be a community champion.

Over to you!

- **Mthokozisi Mabhena**

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DUDUZILE MHLANGA

Duduzile ‘Dudue’ Michelle Mhlanga is a communications officer at a local Bulawayo community-based organisation who believes in the power communication holds to change the world. She believes that proper information dissemination can go a long way towards influencing positive change in young women and adolescent girls.

“

Advocacy to me means holding the **power to influence positive change** through information dissemination.



Duduzile Mhlanga, 29
CBO Communications Officer



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Growing Up

'Duduzile' loosely translated means 'she who has comforted us. So as the firstborn in the family, she was her father's comfort that finally he had been blessed with a child, whereas the second name, 'Michelle', means a gift from God.

Dudue was born to a family of two children in Pumula Old, one of the oldest suburbs in Bulawayo, and she has a younger sister. She has been inspired immensely by her parents, particularly her father, who was a teacher, thus inheriting the gift of teaching others. However, like most Zimbabwean young people, she was raised mainly by her strict paternal grandmother, a tailor whom she describes as "the hardest working woman".

Duduzile did most of her primary and secondary education at St. Bernard's, a Mission School and later transferred to Premier High School, a private school. Attending descent schools and being one of the high-achieving students made her realise that she had the opportunity to develop herself and rise beyond the ceiling imposed on her by tradition. As a result, she started getting interested in pursuing communication. As a bookworm with an aversion to physical sporting activities, she joined and excelled at the quiz, science, conservation, choir and drama clubs.

Adulthood, Adulting and Advocacy

Fast-forward to adulthood, tertiary education was not all that fun. As an adult with financial challenges, it took multiple gap years before enrolling at university with the support of the family, becoming the first graduate in her family, and abandoning her childhood dream to be a lawyer when she found a new calling in communications. After graduation, Duduzile volunteered as a communications officer for a local Faith-based Organisation that lacked a communications department and helped establish one that is still functional today.

Currently, Dudue, in her work as Bulawayo community champion, is now concerned about how full implementation of human rights for human dignity is playing second fiddle to the economic challenges affecting third-world countries. Therefore, there is still an uphill battle in advocating for human rights, especially for young people and children. However, she sleeps better at night knowing that her work holds the power to influence and change narratives; hence, she takes it one step at a time.

Personal Insights

Dudzile is a literature aficionado. She is still waiting for the sequel to ‘Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga as she is interested in seeing how the rural girl's well-told story turns out when she is an adult.

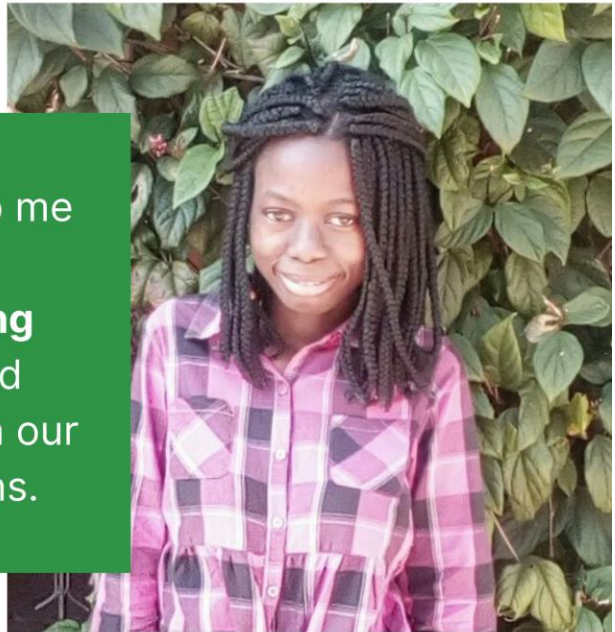
Dudu also believes that there is no prescribed way to success or “making it” as we all have different paths that we should walk. As Shakespeare once aptly put it, “some are born great, others achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them”.

BUHLEBENKOSI NKOMO

Buhlebenkosi "Bambino" Nkomo is a young passionate freelance journalist who began her journey in journalism after high school. While freelancing for Famous Magazine, a Harare-based publication, she was exposed to various community issues such as women and youth empowerment, mental health and lifestyle stories. After honing her pen, still eager to share her thoughts, she opened a second blog on WordPress.com.



Advocacy to me
means
**challenging
norms** and
being bold in our
expressions.



Buhlebenkosi Nkomo, 25

Freelance Journalist



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Growing Up

Buhlebenkosi Nkomo was born on the 3rd of June 1997 into a big family. Buhlebenkosi means ‘the beauty of the Lord’ as her Christian parents considered her and her twin sister a testimony of the beauty of the Lord. Her parents were teachers, the father in tertiary institutions and the mother in junior schools, although her mother has since retired. Even though she never spent much time with her grandparents because they passed when she was still young, she still took inspiration from her grandfather, a journalist.

As an introvert and a bookworm, her childhood was characterised by quiet days and being lost in the beautiful world of books. Even though she had a lot to say, she reserved it for her writing. At this time in her life, she realised she was a fan of telling stories, yet she still dabbled in everything to find her voice and true purpose.

Initially, she never dreamt of being a journalist. Instead, she saw herself as either a doctor or on television. However, when she went into high school, she realised she didn't have the patience to be a doctor and was afraid of blood.

Education and Finding Her Voice

Buhle did her founding grades at HQI Brigade

Primary School, a military school close to Paddonhurst, Bulawayo, and later at Thomas Rudland Primary School. The military school instilled discipline in her, carrying her across her life. After her primaries, she did her secondary level education focusing on commercials, then later humanities at Bulawayo Adventist High School, a Seventh Day Adventist-owned school. The Christian private school provided her with an environment that grounded her, which she enjoyed and thrived. However, whilst she was thriving academically, she could not participate in physical sports because of her asthma.

After graduating high school with an Advanced Level (ZIMSEC), she got accepted at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Zimbabwe. At NUST, she studied towards a degree in Journalism and Media Studies and graduated in 2021.

Learning Herself, For Others

As a journalist, Buhle quickly learnt that she wanted to focus on developmental issues instead of politics. However, when she was offered an opportunity to write a political article for CITE.org.zw, she grabbed it with both hands, even though she had never written a political story before.

Additionally, when Buhle started journalism, she had an impatient temperament. However, she got frustrated due to the nature of her work; as a result, she has learnt to be very patient. Journalism has taught her to be a little more patient because sometimes things don't go according to plan. She believes her work or her purpose in life is to inspire and inform, whether through her journalistic work or her story.

Growing Old and The Future

Buhle sees growing old as a magical experience because she is inclined to think that with it comes wisdom and maturity. But, on the other hand, she has realised that sometimes growing old doesn't equate to wisdom and maturity. So, growing old is one of those things that are sometimes so scary and yet so inevitable. She believes that the most challenging thing about growing old is the responsibility it comes with because, as a child, one is sheltered from the world. Still, growth exposes you, and you need to adapt.

Personal Insights

“Being a journalist has unearthed a whole new world for me because it allowed me to meet people I'd only ever dreamt of meeting. Being able to tackle issues in my community has also been rewarding because I told someone else's story through that. I became someone's voice. I lived their lives in just a few minutes by capturing their stories. I was them, and that's so fulfilling because everyone has a story to tell.”

JOAN MPOFU

Joan Sibongile Mpofu is a student activist, peer educator, gender-based violence advocate and founder of "Locked Tongues", a brand that represents the unrepresented and under-represented and a voice of the voiceless. She has been a change advocate in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, for at least four years.



Advocacy for me
means
**representing the
unrepresented and
underrepresented**
and being a voice
for the voiceless.



Joan Mpofu, 18

Student Activist, GBV Advocate, Founder



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Growing Up

Joan Sibongile Mpfu was born on the 30th of December 2003 at Kings Maternity Home, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Sibongile, loosely translated, means gratitude [to God]. She was given the name because the family was happy that they had finally had a daughter in a household of boys. She was raised by a hardworking, calm and strict mother. As she grew up, her sister influenced her greatly to be a great person and challenged her to be a better person. She is afraid of cats. As a child, she was a tomboy who played with boys.

Education

Joan did her primary education partly in South Africa and later in Zimbabwe. Then she attended St. Columbus and St. Bernards for her Ordinary Level (ZIMSEC) and Advanced Level (ZIMSEC), respectively. At school, at all levels, she was social. She was involved in sporting activities like cricket, debate, chess, netball, basketball and tennis – and fell in love with basketball. During primary school, she was primarily influenced by her teacher Mrs Mthombeni who nurtured her and helped her when she was academically struggling.

When Joan grew up, like most young people in Zimbabwe, she wanted to be a doctor to save lives. Even though she regrettably did not pursue sciences

at Advanced Level (ZIMSEC), she still hasn't given up on the dream of becoming a doctor. She hopes to be the first in her family to attend university.

Life Lessons

Joan's main life lessons are to accept when you are wrong and correct yourself. Her strengths are that she is reliable and fulfils everything she promises. Her weakness is that she sometimes gets imposter syndrome when the task becomes daunting. For example, one of the most challenging tasks she has ever done was when we had planned a donation drive. Still, the campaign was taking slow, and she and her team had to find sponsors – even though they finally did the job, she had felt some self-doubt.

Vision

In five years, Joan sees herself building her own humanitarian organisation focused on helping the less fortunate with dignity kits and food aid. Currently, she is looking forward to working for a humanitarian organisation already improving people's livelihoods.

Joan is not the typical late teen. She wants it all. She plans to continue her personal development journey, mentoring other young girls and having a brand associated with helping people – to be a heroine.

Personal Insights

“My mother has impacted me the most as she has shown resilience. She has motivated me to do things I thought I could not do and is the pillar of my strength. My unique superpower is that I put my mind and soul into whatever I do. As a result, I always get things done significantly.”

MELLISA NCUBE

Mellisa Ncube is a mental health advocate (since 2018) and an entrepreneur (since 2022).



Advocacy to me means reducing ignorance and **speaking out** on issues that will develop our communities.



Mellisa Ncube, 27

CSO Leader and Mental Health Advocate



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Growing Up

Mellisa ‘Tinkerbelle’ Ncube was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as a firstborn with four younger siblings – two girls and two boys. Her name means honey/sweet or calm/care, depending on the definition she prefers on the day. Her parents are hardworking; her mother is a teacher, and her father is an entrepreneur.

She remembers her childhood fondly, with her favourite moments being when her father would take her to a Highlanders FC game when he came from work outside the city and when her mother threw her a surprise party when she was 11. As she grew, she developed a special bond with her maternal grandmother, whom she affectionately describes as stylish and *boujie*. Her grandmother taught her how to be a woman and take care of herself - in her teenage years, she would get her toiletries and make sure she was *fly* (well-dressed).

Education and Learning

Mellisa did her primary and secondary education in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. After graduating from high school with an Advanced Level (ZIMSEC) certificate in Arts, she took a gap year to assess her options. During that time, she read a novel that explored mental health issues, putting her on a path to pursue psychology. After wading off pressure to

pursue a law degree, she enrolled in a psychology program at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. The decision to pursue a degree was not easy, but she found immense support from her parents, her grandmother and her church. As a result, she became the first person in her family to have a university degree. College helped her discover herself, affirm her identity, improve her self-esteem and help her become independent.

After graduating from university, she got a job at an Arts non-governmental organisation. However, the job turned out to be difficult and complex for the young graduate; with her mental health hanging by a thread, she quit. Later, Mellisa found another job at a local Bulawayo-based internet start-up where she thrived.

Influences

The biggest influences in Mellisa's life outside of family have been Nhlanhla Moyo, the former Child President of Zimbabwe and a human rights advocate and Maya Angelou, the globally revered poet. Nhlanhla has inspired Mellisa to grow and occupy bigger places. Whereas Maya Angelou resonates with her because, like Mellisa, she couldn't speak for some time, she bottled up everything, and only later she found her voice.

Lessons From the School of Life

Mellisa has learnt that in life, you need to do what you need to do to do what you want to do. She has learnt that it is important to do every task, even unpleasant ones, to be where she needs to be. She has learnt that it is okay not to win, failure is learning, and one needs to be open to new information. Her strength is that she is very analytical, likes to plan and can network with people. On the other hand, her weakness is that I am bad with time, and I procrastinate.

The Future

Mellisa hopes to continue on her path of personal development and enrol for a master's degree in 2023. Ultimately, she hopes to attain a PhD in Neuroclinical Psychology, build her Home and Beauty business and grow Pro Youth, her organisation.

Personal Insights

“I am afraid of snakes and the darkness.

Being a mental health advocate has helped me become confident in my voice and also be able to coordinate complex projects. Additionally, I have learnt empathy, that is, learn how to relate to different kinds of people”.

“God will never allow you to start something you can't finish” - Melissa's Mother.

CHIDADISO MBAZO

Chidadiso Francisca Mbazo is a multidisciplinary artist (spoken word poet, actress, writer, and model) and a change advocate (gender and disability).



Advocacy for me means **making the world aware of issues that a certain disadvantaged group faces** vying for change in the process.



Chidadiso Francisca Mbazo, 19

Multidisciplinary Artists



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Growing Up

Chidadiso Francisca 'Pinky' Mbazo was born on the 17th of May 2003 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Chidadiso, loosely translated, means 'our pride' whereas Francisca means freedom or free woman or someone with independent thinking. Chichie, the Poetic Queen, as she is sometimes known, is inspired to be outspoken by her industrious self-employed mother.

Whilst she did not meet her maternal grandmother because she passed on when her mother was only three years old, she developed a relationship with her grandfather, whom she describes as a well of wisdom and the most interesting person she knows.

Chichie grew up indoors, and her life revolved around books, yet she was very talkative and still is. Given her gift of gab, she wanted to be a high court judge. However, after Advanced Level (ZIMSEC), she decided to study sociology at one of the prestigious Zimbabwean universities, Lupane State University.

After graduating from high school, she has undertaken various projects that have built her confidence and work ethic. She has contested for Miss Albinism Zimbabwe without sponsorship, has

been a coordinating intern at a local community-based organisation and has been a freelance journalist for various local publications.

Life Lessons and the Future

Chichie has learnt that life has no defined pathway to success. Yet, one should still apply themselves and improve as much as possible. This drive for success and to be impactful has triggered the fear of dying without fulfilling her full potential. However, she believes that her purpose in life is to impact people's lives and change people's perceptions about women in African society and disabilities. The future for our budding artist and advocate is to be a best-selling author reaching the writing prowess of JK Rowling, a renowned poet and a respected model.

Personal Insights

“To me, a good life is not financial stability or being rich. But a good life is being impactful. Knowing that I inspired change for my people and community is my life's most important thing.”

GUGULETHU NDLOVU

Gugulethu Ndlovu is a cook and a peer educator who is hands-on with community activities in her ward, such as clean-up campaigns, peer mobilising, planning, implementation, and facilitating of youth programs and helping young people access sexual and reproductive health services.



Advocacy to me means **bringing about change** and being a voice for the voiceless.



Gugulethu Ndlovu, 19
Peer Educator & Advocate for Change



Growing Up

Gugulethu ‘Gugu’ Ndlovu was born on the 9th of June in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Gugulethu means ‘our precious thing’. The story behind the name is that her mother considered her a miracle baby. Therefore, she called her ‘her precious thing’. Growing up, she and her sister were raised by a hardworking mother who instilled Christian virtues in her children and inspired them to do more.

Education

Gugu attended her primary and secondary education at Insukamini Primary School and Mpopoma High school, respectively, located in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The young peer educator cherished the school environment because that is where she would meet, play and talk with her friends. Coming from a grounded home, she was that child in class who always listened to her teacher and followed the rules. At high school, she was greatly influenced by the Geography teacher, Mr Mbadzi, who always began the lesson by writing and emphasising the phrase "do not fear".

After passing her Ordinary Level (ZIMSEC) in 2018, she didn't have the finances to further her studies. However, she got an opportunity to join DREAMS, a program for young girls and women which taught mostly about girl empowerment. The

program paid her fees to study a three-month hotel and catering course at a Vocational Training Centre. Afterwards, she got four months at a supermarket she started her first job as a Baker. Then, after a brief interruption due to COVID-19, she resumed work at the company as a cook.

Growing Old

For the 20-year-old Gugu, growing old is not scary if one rises to a promising future they have built for themselves. Planning and creating dreams and aspirations help one see and prepare for the future they want - and life has improved with practice and learning from mistakes. However, the young cook believes that the hardest thing about growing old is that with age comes experience. Yet, one can never be young again to change or correct the decisions and paths that they have taken in the past. Therefore, there is always regret hovering over the mistakes that one makes, and it is a haunting feeling.

Moreover, growing old comes with the pressure and anxiety of realising that one is not what one would like to be. There is a lot of pressure from expectations that come with age from loved ones and society. However, when she feels trapped by societal pressure, she affirms herself by

acknowledging that everyone has their own time in line and her own time has not yet reached. Therefore, she encourages herself to keep on moving forward.

Life Lessons

Through her journey as a cook and peer educator, Gugu has learnt that

1. Everyone is running their own race, and she shouldn't give in to pressure or compare her journey with her peers – a journey of thousand miles start with baby steps.

2. As a Christian, she should wait on the Lord and have faith that her time will come.

3. She should not start a day without prayer, a prayer of supplication, and a thanksgiving prayer.

4. She must learn to be very humble and sociable and surround herself with people who want to see her grow and succeed. Choosing the right people is important because they can easily influence her actions and choices in life.

5. She should focus on implementing her great ideas instead of just thinking about them.

6. She should take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way, such as the YIELD Trust Nanomedia Training for young women community champions.

Plans for the Future

The young cook is looking forward to securing a job to further her studies in hospitality and later start her own restaurant. She looks forward to a future that will make her grow into a strong and independent woman. Gugu has ambitions to build her mother a house so she can live the life she deserves as her shero.

Gugulethu Ndlovu has come a long way from being a shy girl to the strong, outspoken, and ambitious young lady celebrated as a Bulawayo Community Champion.

Personal Insights

“Helping people provides me with the meaning of life. I channelled that by helping the most vulnerable and marginalised persons by bringing the best out of them, standing up for them being their voice and involving them in most of the activities that happen in my community by being a Peer educator, and I have been doing this for 2 years.”

SALLY TSHUMA

Sally Tshuma is a businesswoman who teaches entrepreneurship to women in her community.



Advocacy to me means **making the right noise**, with the right beliefs and speaking out for those with no voice



Sally Tshuma
Entrepreneur



Growing Up

Sally 'Lady S' Tshuma was born in 1988 at Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Sally is a British name which means "a sudden attack by an enemy". It was given to her by her father. He was a military man inspired by Sally Mugabe, the first wife of the former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe. Sally is second born to a family of four children, having two younger brothers and an older sister.

Sally was raised by her parents, who were loving and strict in equal measure. Her father, E. Tshuma, a soldier, war veteran, handyman, sculptor and cobbler, was humble and quiet. In contrast, her mother, S. Tshuma nee Ncube, a farmer, was strict. Unfortunately, both parents have since passed away. However, at a young age, she was influenced by her mother, an honest hard worker. As a result, she also ventured into entrepreneurship.

Education

Sally did her foundational education at Nyamande Primary School, then her secondary education at Njube High School and later Induna High School, all in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She became grounded and well-mannered as a student from a military household and later attended a military school. Although hating the long distance to school and the language barriers she faced, she loved playing

volleyball and tennis at school. After graduating high school, she enrolled at Zimbabwe College and studied Hotel and Catering. After that, she secured her first job as a relief teacher and became a sales representative. Then, realising that jobs were hard to come by in Zimbabwe, she opened her own business making cleaning detergents.

Life Lessons

As a young mother, Sally had a rocky marriage involving physical abuse. After some time, she gathered the courage to divorce her husband, even though she regretted not doing it sooner. The most difficult part for her was separating from her family. As a result of her experiences, she wants to teach the 2 girls she is proud to raise to be strong independent women. Her Christian faith has come in handy in her parenting journey as she trusts in God and depends on Him for sustenance. Even though she regrets being a young mother, she has learnt to accept the things she cannot change and accept those she can change. In her entrepreneurship teachings, she always tells young women to "do it for themselves and start somewhere."

Personal Insights

“With age, there is wisdom. You can see things from a different perspective. My purpose in life is to give courage to the weak. I want to be known as the most truthful person in life.”

SAMANTHA MUSVABURI

Samantha Musvaburi is a young ICT specialist, journalist, gender activist, speaker and actress. She has volunteered in her community, mentoring other young girls and advocating against gender inequality and gender-based violence.

“

Advocacy for me means **fighting gender inequality** by amplifying women's voices through film and speech.



Samantha Musvaburi , 19

Public Speaker and Gender Activist



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Growing Up

Samantha ‘Shona lakoBulawayo’ Musvaburi was born in 2003, to a family of 6, in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She spent some of her formative years in Mberengwa Village, Zimbabwe. She got the nickname "Shona lakoBulawayo" in her childhood from friends and family because her mother is of Ndebele ethnicity while her father is of Shona ethnicity. Yet, she was born and raised in Bulawayo – a place with a majority of Ndebele speakers. She grew up in a loving and strict family, yet was the outspoken member of the family who always loved experimenting and the spotlight.

Her biggest influences are her aunt, Vimbai Musvaburi, and her father. She considers her aunt an iconic journalist, activist and politician in Zimbabwe who exudes confidence. Her father inspired her childhood dream to be an IT Technician for the Apple Inc. company as he is also an IT Technician at R. Chitrin & Co.

Education and Career

Samantha did her primary schooling at Coghlan Primary School, a prestigious private school for girls located in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She then did her secondary education at Founders High School, where she did sciences and later switched to commercials.

After graduating high school with an Ordinary Level (ZIMSEC) certificate, she did not pursue Advanced Level. Instead, she opted to work for an IT company. This period helped Samantha grow and mature. However, after the intervention from her father, she enrolled on tertiary education at Bulawayo Polytechnic and studied Information Technology.

With an avid interest in media and arts, in 2022, Samantha started taking her acting career seriously. She started doing comedy skits and sometimes awareness skits on her own and shared them on Tiktok, a micro-video sharing platform. In that same period, she responded to a call for actors and was selected as one of the show's leads. Since then, she has used her acting and speaking skills to amplify unheard voices.

Life Lessons and Hopes for the Future

The young technician and artist are hopeful for the future. She cherishes the benefits of adulting, such as the freedom to make her own decisions, the freedom to move out from the family home and be independent, and the freedom to make mistakes and learn. Samantha hoped that immediately after starting her media campaigns, she would be the best female technician, get an overseas scholarship, and expand her brand – but she has since learnt she is

not the author of her life, and life comes with its own challenges.

Personal Insights

“I want to be known as "The Shona lakoBulawayo": the best female advocate. I want more girls to get the courage and voice to speak out. I have learnt that if you want something, you need to fight for it. Fight for your identity. You are not what they say you are. You are who you want to be. You shape your name. You shape your identity.”

JENNIFER CHIVEYA

Jennifer Chiveya is a philanthropist at heart, an activist, a creative, a storyteller, a writer, a blogger, a poet and a brand owner. She believes she has a calling to tell stories that either arouses the human mind for fun or speak up for the voiceless, the oppressed or suppressed.

“

Advocacy to me means **creating a better Zimbabwe** for our generation and the one to follow.

Jennifer S. Chiveya

Poet, Writer and Entrepreneur



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Shape The Future Today!

Growing Up

Jennifer 'Jenn' Chiveya was born in 1997 to a family of three siblings – one older and two younger. They were raised in a traditional family by their mother and father. Her father is a strict development practitioner, whereas her mother is a housewife with "a golden heart", as she puts it. As a young child, the now outspoken and bold artist was very shy, timid, afraid of the dark and scared of bugs.

Jenn's earliest and lasting influences were her parents. Her father has always been a confident and outspoken man, and her mother has hospitality, which influenced her to be an outspoken creative who seeks to make people feel included.

Education

The young artist had her foundational education at McKeurtan Primary School. She attended her secondary education at Sizane High School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. During her primary schooling, she was over a confident pupil, but over the years, she became shy, quiet and timid.

However, that never stopped her from doing her favourite sports, like swimming and athletics or meeting great friends like Fezile Nyathi. Participating in sports gave her the spotlight that she didn't have in class or on the playground.

After graduating from high school with an Advanced Level (ZIMSEC) certificate, with the support of family, she got accepted at Solusi University, a prestigious Seventh Day Adventist-owned private university. At Solusi, fuelled by her love for children and drive to shape the next generation, she studied Early Childhood Development. However, she is still also passionate about development and activism.

Life Lessons

After her varied experiences in life, the young artist and activist said she has learnt the following in life:

1. Ignore negative comments and live for who God created you to be. She learnt this when she discovered her passion and area of interest and became happier. She is less fearful now and learning to be more kind to herself.

2. Forgive yourself for all the opportunities you did not take. She learnt this when she let go of certain opportunities because of anxiety and depression. She would feel she was not good enough for certain spaces and then shy. Since she has learnt to forgive herself, she has learnt that God created her for a greater purpose.

3. Look for the best in everyone regardless of how they appear or seem; everyone has a strength that should not be overlooked. However, everyone

needs a little work and sometimes just a hand or even just one human being to believe in them to see that they can be anything they see themselves to be.

4. To trust that God has a higher purpose for everyone and that dreams are valid, one must be brave enough to wake up and live through them.

5. A good life involves freedom in all aspects, that is, good health, good financial standing, good relations, a great state of mind and freedom to be one's self fully.

6. You must always be true to who you are, no matter the circumstances. You always have to stay loyal to what feels right from the inside of your gut.

7. Do your best, and God will handle the rest.

The Future

Jenn is still certain that she is still experiencing the feelings she experienced when she was younger such as fear, anxiety and depression. However, she is now working on healing by understating that it is just a cycle that needs patience and deeper understanding. The artist wants to continue to explore activism through writing, poetry, photography, and blogging, as art brings her peace and happiness.

Jennifer realises that being a Zimbabwean artist is difficult and requires one to work harder. She notes that *“The hardest thing about growing up has been facing realities that our dreams are crushed every day because I have*

to wake up every day to a Zimbabwe that refuses to change and the realisation that I have to work ten times harder than the average person to get to my goal and make sure I attain the change I'm seeking. However, the best thing is learning and unlearning throughout the entire process and taking each challenge as it comes, and that's exciting!"

The poet's bucket list includes travelling the world, swimming with the sharks, meeting Steve Harvey and asking for three more wishes from the genie.

Jennifer Chiveya has come a long way as an artist and human. Her journey helped her understand that we don't have to understand the process of life but go through it, even badly. God knows who we are, where we are now and why and where we are headed – and that's enough to go through life confidently.

Personal Insights

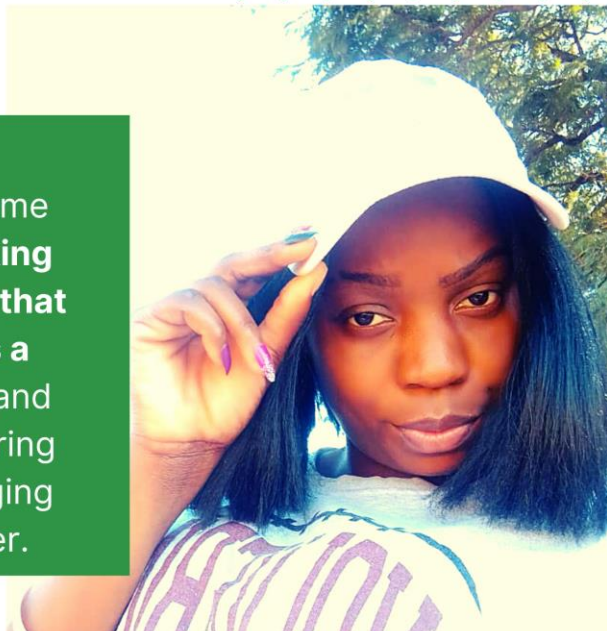
“My favourite book is Nectar by Upile Chisala because the author is a powerful storyteller who can capture your attention and birth meaning in a few words; my favourite movie is Queen and Slim, an almost classic movie that brings attention to racism and equality in America and a beautiful love story.”

ESNATH PHIRI

Esnath Phiri is a hairdresser and a community training facilitator for training on teenage pregnancy, girl child and gender-based violence.



Advocacy to me means **speaking out on issues that affect us as a community**, and also empowering and encouraging each another.



Esnath Phiri, 26

Peer Educator, Facilitator, GBV Activist



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Growing Up

Esnath 'Nathi' Phiri is the last born in a family of six – with surviving three girls and two boys. The nickname "Nathi" is a derivative of Esnath, a common way of generating terms of endearment in Zimbabwean societies. She has also been called "Nana" because she used to have a small body as a child, and the nickname stuck with her. She grew up with both loving parents. However, her father passed on when she was still young. Her industrious mother was the one who raised them as she was self-employed.

Influences

Some of Esnath's influences in life come from her pastor, her mother and Joyce Mujuru, the former Zimbabwean first and only female vice president. Nathi admires these women because they have demonstrated that women can do what men can do.

Education and Career

When she was young, she wanted to be either a designer or an engineer. Because she grew up playing with wires and cables with her brother. For primary schooling, she went to Mtshede Primary School and then for secondary education, she was enrolled at Msitheli High School, both schools in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She enjoyed the school

environment as she loved being a noisemaker, making other people laugh and being a class clown. After graduating from high school with an Ordinary Level (ZIMSEC) certificate, she could not proceed to Advanced Level due to limited finances at home, so she opted to do a short course in dressmaking. However, now she works as a hairdresser.

Life Lessons

Nathi has learnt that not everyone is gifted academically and whose path to success is through education. However, one needs to be independent.

Esnath Phiri says she still hasn't discovered her true purpose in life, but she has been praying about it – and she has learnt to be optimistic about life.

Personal Insights

“I am also a hairdresser and a child of God. I have been a community facilitator for 4 years. I am passionate about the girl child in our community where patriarchy dominates. Our young don't occupy spaces where we come from, and information does not get to them.”

AEJAY AUGUST

Jacqueline Sharon Arifandika, alias Aejay August is a multidisciplinary artist (songwriter, singer, filmmaker and sometimes a stand-up comedian) with over fifteen years as a musician and a children's rights activist. She uses music as my therapy for her and her audience.



Advocacy to me is being a **voice to the voiceless**, using music and film as a tool to make the world a better place.



Aejay August, 33

Multidisciplinary Artist



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Early Education

Aejay August did all her primary and secondary education at David Livingstone Primary School and David Livingstone High School in Ntabazinduna, Matebeleland South, Zimbabwe. As a student, she was quiet, reserved and in her own world. She would sit in the front row alone, listen to the teachers and just focus on what was being taught. When no teachers were around, she would perfect her art by writing poems, songs and short stories.

Growing up, because she was surrounded by male siblings, she was always one with the boys – playing cricket, listening to metal and rock music, and dressing up like a tomboy.

Career

After graduating from her secondary education, Aejay August became a professional musician. However, after seven years in the industry, she realised she needed to return to school and have a backup plan in case music didn't work out. Then she enrolled with Trust Academy to study Travel and Tourism Management. Whilst she had earlier wanted to be a lawyer. She pursued arts subjects when she studied literature and fell in love with music. However, when she got the opportunity to choose something different, she figured Travel and Tourism would be more fulfilling than Law as it is in line with art.

Life Lessons

Aejay August, through her humble beginnings, struggles and overcoming those struggles, has learnt that:

1. As a Christian, you need to trust in God and believe that failure is a part of growth and being a person. Great people are those that accept failure and move on.

2. Losing people is part of life because death cannot be avoided.

3. Everything in life is as meant to be. Everything that has happened contributed to who you are, and every journey has changed how you see life.

Reflection on Growth and the Future

Aejay August believes that the hardest thing about growing up is realising that you can no longer do a lot of things you used to do when you were younger. Life moves fast. You grow up very quickly, and you don't realise many things you were supposed to do when you were younger, which can be frustrating.

On the other hand, being young makes you realise the world is not what you intended it to be. When you are younger, you don't know right from wrong. Everything is simple and black and white.

You don't realise there are so many different colours, some are so bright they could make you blind, you don't see much of how the world works.

Therefore, being allowed to grow is a blessing, given that other people, unfortunately, die before they can reach the age of 30 - to live this long is a blessing. She always thought that it is only when you are older that you gain wisdom until she realised that life challenges graduate you to a position of wisdom. Therefore, it is not about age; it is about life experience.

If Aejay August were to live twenty to thirty more years, she would continue to fight for justice. She will use her love for music and film to carry the conversations. Five years from now, she sees herself as a film director and author, winning Oscars and Grammys awards and settling with a family of her own.

Jacqueline Sharon Arifandika, alias Aejay August, is working on a gospel and video album where she wants to express her love for Jesus Christ through music. In this album and other works, she wishes to partner with organisations and individuals willing to support her.

Aejay's bucket list includes visiting many

countries to experience different cultures, languages and food.

Personal Insights

“I am special in my profession because I work very hard, work without ceasing just to produce better results, love what I do, and am passionate about helping young Zimbabweans become aware of their rights. I love to see children happy; I see myself in them. The innocence of children should never be tampered with. They should be allowed to grow and explore at their own pace. I want to help a lot of children to get into school. I want to open a Music and Film Academy for the children to grow their talents at a young age and grasp opportunities that I never got.”

YVONNE MARY STOMU

Yvonne Mary Stomu is a journalism student at the National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe.



Advocacy for me means **promoting equality**, social justice and human rights with encouragement and support.



Stomu Yvonne M, 24

Journalism and Media Student



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Growing Up

Yvonne Mary Stomu was born on the 12th of February in 1998 in Rusape, Zimbabwe. The name Yvonne is Spanish derived from the French names Yves and Yvette, which means Yewtree. Mary means beloved and was derived from the Ancient Hebrew name Miriam. However, her preferred name is Madam Stomu because her friends gave it to her as a reflection of her authority and confidence, especially when addressing people.

In her life, Yvonne has been chiefly inspired by her mother because she is industrious and has made sacrifices for the family.

Education and Career

As a child in primary school, Yvonne dreamt of becoming a lawyer. Still, unfortunately, when she got to Advanced Level, she did not attain the minimum required to pass. As a result, she decided to pursue Public Relations, and to get there, she had to start with Journalism.

She recently graduated from the National University of Science and Technology with a Journalism and Media studies degree. Next, she intends to start on her master's degree to kickstart her public relations career.

Unlike most journalism students, Yvonne does not consider herself a writer; however, during her work-related learning attachment, she got the opportunity to work in a newsroom where she wrote several stories, some of which impacted communities. For example, she has written stories covering public service delivery covering water shortages, waterborne diseases, refuse collection and burst pipes - and action was taken by the authorities after having read some of the stories.

Future

For Madam Stomu, the goal is to become a public relations officer and the best in the field. She wants to do impactful work that helps people, even if it is just one person. For her, being able to make a difference is very fulfilling, and it makes her happy.

Personal Insights

“During the #CommunitySheroes campaign under the YIELD Trust Nanomedia training program, I focused on depression because I saw how mental health is neglected in our communities. During the campaign, quite a several people came forward with their stories, and I created a safe space for some to share their stories and how they survived depression or lived with depression daily.”

ABIGAIL GUMPO

Abigail Gumpo is a civil and water engineer by profession and a YouTube content creator by expression. She is passionate about improving the lives of her community and Africa.



Advocacy for me means having **the audacity to express myself** and empowering others to do the same.



Abigail Gumpo, 30
Engineer and YouTube Vlogger



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Growing Up

Abigail Gumpo was born and raised in Nkulumane, Bulawayo. Abigail means 'father rejoiced' because her father wanted a girl when they were pregnant. So, when a girl was born, her father was happy and gave her this beautiful name. Abigail was raised in a loving home with both parents, with the father as a headmaster and the mother as a teacher at primary school. Unfortunately, her father passed away in 2015, and her maternal grandmother a year later.

From her early years, Abigail always looked up to her mother, who she describes as "phenomenal". Her mother has a master's degree in educational psychology, is a school teacher and is the head of the department for student counselling. Growing up, Abigail admired the poise, intelligence, values and grace her mother exuded.

Education and Career

When Abigail grew up, like most Zimbabwean children, she dreamt of being a pilot until she realised she was terrified of heights. As a teenager, she was timid because she had low self-esteem because of her eczema and acne. Even so, she was the most intelligent in class, scooping the best student award in the whole of Matabeleland South Province at the Ordinary Level (ZIMSEC). She

went to Mafela Primary School in Nkulumane, Bulawayo, for her foundational grades. For her secondary education, she was enrolled at Mtshabezi High School in Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe. After graduating from Mtshabezi with an Advanced Level (ZIMSEC) certificate, she was admitted to the National University of Science and Technology, where she studied Civil and Water Engineering.

Abigail largely attributes her academic excellence to her father. He was firm and strict and would give supplementary lessons after school. He instilled the value and importance of hard work. He always told her, “there is no inheritance I can leave for you that no man cannot take except for education”.

Impact

For Abigail Gumpo, everything she does revolves around creating a lasting impact. This impact contributes to sustainable developmental goals. As an engineer, her work involves giving the community quality water. In her advocacy work and YouTube content creation, she pushes for gender equality, opening access for women to male-dominated industries, mentoring young and adolescent girls and inspiring the next Abigail.

Personal Insights

“We can have that impact and improve our quality of life if we are intentional about having a social impact. If you do good to one person, it will have a ripple effect, and the community will be serviced. I became a YouTuber because I desire to express to the world that women can succeed in Stem and that social change can be achieved by doing good one person at a time.”

About Us

The Nanomedia Project was a six-week training for Women Community Champions in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The program was wholly supported by YET Trust.

For more information about YET Trust, please visit <https://yett.org>

About YIELD Trust

Youth-led Innovative Engagement with Leadership and Development (YIELD) Trust is a registered youth-led, youth-focused, independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). The organisation strengthens capacities and provides platforms to women and young people to advocate for their rights, influence policy and hold public officials accountable.

We are mission-driven: YIELD Trust's mission is to start and sustain the type of conversations and initiatives that will build the youths for the future.

To support the Bulawayo Community Champions or our work, please contact YIELD Trust on all socials:

Email: yieldtrustzimbabwe@gmail.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/yieldzw>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/y.i.e.l.d>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Yieldzw>

Website: <https://yield.co.zw>

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