

ASHLEY KRIEL YOUTH LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

my voice, our story

A collection of young voices



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The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation contributes to the building of fair, democratic and inclusive societies in Africa before, during and after political transition.

It seeks to advance dialogue and social transformation. Through research, analysis, community intervention, spirited public debate and grassroots encounters, the Institute's work aims to create a climate in which people in divided societies are willing to build a common, integrated nation.

The Institute is committed to peacemaking at every level of society, by breaking down old boundaries and reshaping social paradigms.

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my voice, our story

This book is a collection of stories from the youth who were involved in the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's youth project, The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project.

This reflects the collective journey participants embarked on and is testimony to their dedication to self-improvement and their commitment to promoting reconciliation and building inclusive societies.

Special recognition goes to Hilton Nyirenda, who co-facilitated the workshops and who has greatly enriched the project with his skills as facilitator and experience in working with youth.

A vote of thanks goes to Arnold Ndepa, who manages the University of the Western Cape's Advanced Leadership Programme; Zain Nazier, the youth coordinator at the NGO New World Foundation; and partners at Stellenbosch University, who sourced youth from their respective institutions and organisations to be part of the project.

Many of the staff at IJR were instrumental in informing the development and implementation of the project and their input has been invaluable.

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's youth project, The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project, draws its inspiration from young political activists such as youth leader Ashley Kriel, from the Cape Flats in the Western Cape, who was murdered by the apartheid regime in the 1980s. He is recognised as the archetypal representative of student and youth leadership.

Ashley Kriel is a symbol of and for youth activism, in its many forms, as well as a symbol for the very real potential that youth wield for bringing about social change.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To strengthen the capacities of young people in order to enable them to recognise and take ownership of their agency through building their assets and ultimately realising their full potential
- To foster a sense of national cohesion, while acknowledging the existence of diverse circumstances and needs by providing opportunities to address these
- To create a wider range of ways of learning and to provide young people with multiple avenues and exit opportunities for making the transition from youth to adulthood

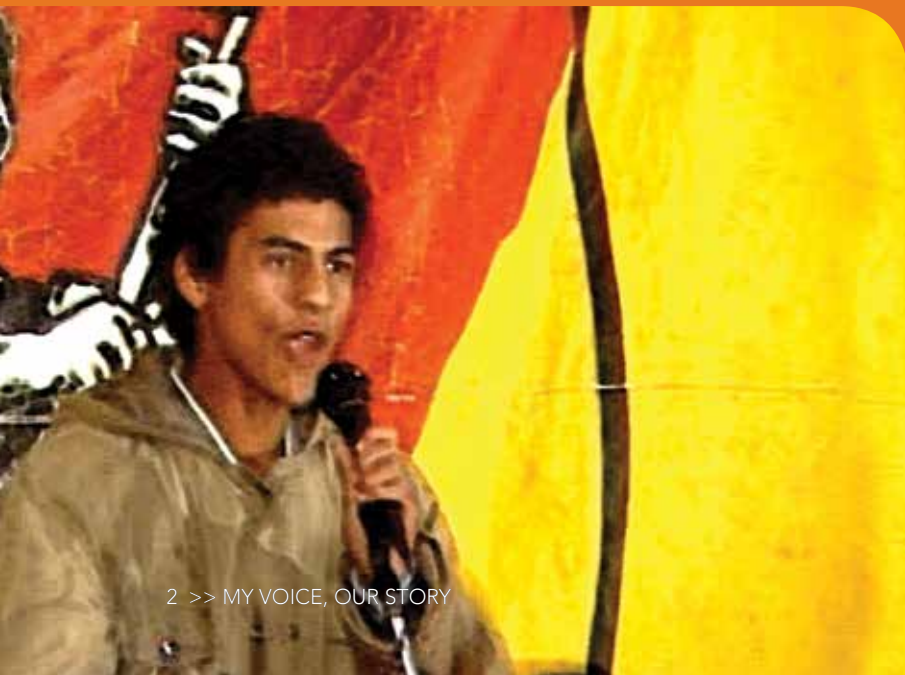
The Ashley Kriel Leadership Development Project is hinged on the principle of leadership development through knowledge production and sharing, and endeavours to create a better balance between research, teaching and learning.

The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project conducted a series of workshops that engaged youth on the topics of history, youth activism, memory, personal aspirations, and the relationship between the past and the present. The project consisted of participants from universities and high schools and from various socio-economic backgrounds and communities.

This year's theme ***My Voice, Our Story*** encouraged the active expression of youth voice in a way that affirms youth agency, while simultaneously recognising the diverse stories and experiences of our shared past. The year's workshop sessions provided youth with platforms where personal and historical perspectives could be acknowledged, prejudices challenged and inclusive narratives explored.

Through interactions with one another in various historical spaces in and around Cape Town, participants were able to reflect on their personal stories in relation to their peers', and recognise the potential they have in bringing about positive change not only in their personal lives but also in their communities.

The objective of this publication is to showcase the multiplicity of stories that are embodied in the young people who formed part of the project.



who is lost?

Who is lost?

In his reflection, Sandile Masoka asks the question: "Who is lost?" As you read through the stories, reflections and poems written by the participants in the programme, I'd like to invite you to ask yourself this question.

In every society, throughout the ages, youth have received immense criticism from older generations. In South Africa, the post-apartheid generation is labelled as politically apathetic, selfish and yes, lost. In my experience of working with young people across the culture and class spectrum, this is definitely not the case. Our youth are filled with passion, with ideas and with a deep desire to contribute to our society. What they lack are sufficient programmes and spaces where they can explore their talents, get to know themselves and find ways to share their gifts with us. Creating these programmes and spaces doesn't have to cost much or need huge resources. It can be as simple as bringing a group of youth together and listening to what they have to say. Ask them about their lives, about their dreams, about their challenges, and offer them support to make it happen. The very act of listening is a powerful one. When we truly listen, without judgement or interruption, we give youth the opportunity to speak their hearts and feel heard and seen.

The theme **My Voice, Our Story** is two-fold. First it is about inviting youth to make their voices heard. This is a simple yet extremely powerful thing. It involves discovering who they are, where they come from and asks them to think about who they want to be and how they

want to achieve their goals. Secondly, it asks them to think about their story in relation to those of the people around them. It is an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging, connection and true community.

The process of writing these stories started with a creative storytelling process called body mapping. The youth reflected on their journey in the programme, through tracing their outlines on a large piece of paper. Using colours and symbols they painted their stories onto their bodies. It was a time of reflection and discovery for many of them. It was also a time of healing and celebration. After the body mapping, they then moved on to writing poems and short essays to share their experiences. In each group, I was moved by the warmth, respect and love with which they listened to and supported each other. The word "inspired" means "to breathe in spirit". Each of us left feeling deeply inspired by each other's stories and courage.

We're always saying the youth are our future. I disagree. They are our present. Our society should be measured by how we treat and prioritise our youth. It should be measured by how we listen to and hear our youth. And so, to all the participants in the 2013 programme, I want to say: "Roar Young Lions, Roar." Speak. Make your voices heard. Don't wait for someone to listen. Speak and move from your heart, and you find that people simply will.

Toni Stuart

a collection of young voices

“Reconciliation to me is the **process** of coming to terms with the past, understanding what/why we are in the place/situation that we find ourselves. To discuss the hurt or injustices of the past and discussing it because once you **honestly** and **openly** say how you are **feeling** there is a weight lifted off one’s shoulders. That is when the first steps toward **forgiveness** and **healing**. It must be structured, not a blame game. Commonalities could be found and through forgiveness, **understanding** and **meaningful discussions** we could start a process of imagining the changes we would like to see and the change we can make.”





a collection of young voices

“Reconciliation to me means bringing communities **together**. It is a form of **healing wounds** of the apartheid era and hopefully having a better understanding of other cultures.

We need to reconcile as South Africans for the sake of our country and its economy. Reconciling will stop the blame and will make us **understand the past** and have a better **perspective**.”



a collection of young voices

“To me reconciliation means **reaching out** and **supporting** one another. One tends to think about race but reconciliation is needed within the same race groups as well. It involves **forgiveness** and **building bridges** to overcome the wrongs of the past.”





a collection of young voices

“Reconciliation is about **dialogue** and **encouraging people** to talk to each other, especially people who are seemingly different. Reconciliation is and can be found in **the power of healing.**”

a collection of young voices

“I have learned to **share** my thoughts with people. I also learned that people might be different in **colour, age, gender and culture** but with all of their **differences** they share **common goals** of making a world a better place. In IJR we have been pushed out of our comfort zone and share things that we are not comfortable with.”



“I am a **somebody** and I am able to reach my **dreams**. **Life is in the tongue.**”

“A new **excitement** of life has been ignited within me. I have learnt that you’re never too old to have **ridiculously far-fetched dreams.**”

“I have learned to be more **optimistic** in life and remind myself of why I am where I am and how to **move forward.**”

“I have used the **listening skills** I gained. The workshops have also **boosted** my **confidence** and **helped** me in job interviews because now I feel less nervous. I am able to **communicate better** with others. I also have been **inspired** by those other people I met in sessions.”



Wow! *My journey*

It's been seven months already. I swear it feels like last week that I came through the doors of the Homecoming Centre in Cape Town and met a group of a very vibrant youth who were eager to learn.

I embraced the programme with a lot of uncertainty as to whether it was good enough, whether I would gain anything credible from it. I guess part of the doubt I had was walking into a room where half of the people there were high school learners. Somehow I had this idea that as a university student I had nothing to learn from them. I undermined the content of the programme by the mere fact that there was such a huge gap in thinking between university students and those of high school learners.

Today I humbly can say that I was wrong for underestimating the programme directors and facilitators and the high school learners. I have grown immensely from the experience of this programme. I have learned face value of how powerful human interaction is. I have fed from the minds and hearts of many participants in the programme and every evening I went home, I learnt something new, something about myself. Am I a better leader? Yes! Am I a better individual? Yes!

Really it's a matter of thanking unsung heroes – like Ashley Kriel who fought for the liberation struggle unselfishly – that we have these opportunities. I feel though as if our history has betrayed a lot of iconic individuals and some struggles to bring about change for the people of South Africa. Our curriculums in schools teach us more of the great depression and world wars (as relevant as they are) than they do about our own history. Question is who do we then blame for this misfortune. It is through programmes like these that, at the level of education I am, I was able to learn about people like Cecil Esau and their role in the struggle.

As for the journey we have taken towards reconciliation, we are stagnantly progressing. I cannot however say that the way it's painted to have been such a success is how I view it. A lot needs to be done. We are not yet a healed nation when we allow to be distinguished still by racial lines and social divides. Don't take this the wrong way, racialism in our country is real and a serious redress is in need. Problem is the mechanisms we have employed to deal with redress. Potent example is that of BEE, such a powerful tool yet has not had much effect in the past 20 years, well at least for the common people.

I believe that the more the youth is congregated and such dialogues are opened, the more certain is the future. Really, these are the people who will lead us tomorrow. And while we are congregating the youth, let's have intergenerational dialogues so that we understand and are informed of past decisions and mistakes so we don't make the same ones. The Ashley Kriel Youth Development Project is one of those youth platforms and I hope it will grow and continue in influencing the youth to be more involved and aware. I am indebted to Eleanor and Hilton who have facilitated this process of growth and understanding. I wish nothing but the best for their future endeavours and hope to keep engaging us as past participants of the programme so that we may impart knowledge to those who follow and in that way we give back.

Yeah it's been a journey, one that was short lived.
Thank you.

Keep up with my journey on my blog:
amjokozeli.wordpress.com



One of the most powerful lessons I have learnt during this course was the power of stories.

EVERY PERSON HAS A STORY.

We should take ownership of our stories and use them to empower ourselves but to inspire others. Each person has a unique genetic, cultural and social make-up.

A UNIQUE VOICE.

We should use our voices as tools to educate, empower and inspire!

Here follows my story:

At 01:00 on the morning of 2 September 2009 I stood and watched as my house went down in flames. That night, there was dead silence as seven people lay on a double mattress in the dwelling that I once called my home. Two hours later I got up, got dressed and left for school. Where most kids would jump at the opportunity to stay home: I didn't. For me school was a sanctuary. Like many other ambitious youth in South Africa, education was my ticket out.

Growing up in a one bedroom apartment on Voortrekker Road, Parow, life did not seem to hold many opportunities. My mother was my biggest inspiration. She taught me to never fall victim to our circumstances and we must work hard for what we want to achieve. She was a domestic worker. She did her job with pride, because she knew her job determined her self-worth. She worked hard and realised the importance of education. From a young age she taught me that you need to take pride in everything you do, whether it is homework or cleaning a bathroom after someone else. You should always do everything to the best of your abilities.

In 2009 we were evicted, and we moved in with my aunt and her two daughters in Bonteheuwel. Even though it was a poverty-stricken suburb, there was a sense of community like I had never experienced before. I realised the true value of people and family while staying there. At the end of the day people play the biggest roles in our lives. The relationships you build with those around you and the experiences you share together, those are the memories which remain constant in this ever-changing world. Therefore you need to cherish these relationships and appreciate the value they currently add to your life, because each one plays a valuable role in forming the person you will become.

I promised myself that I would not fall into the same trap many of my family members had fallen into. I used their experiences as guidance and my circumstances as my motivation to work even harder. Every morning I would wake up 04:30 in order to be in time for the two trains I took to school. If you asked me about my future then I would never have imagined that the University of Stellenbosch would be part of it. But because of leaders, mentors and role models disguised as family members, neighbours and teachers I have managed to reach this dream.

I believe this course is highly relevant given the context South African youth find themselves in. There are many youth out there like me with similar stories, and I believe that through this leadership development course they can be empowered. It also encourages individuals to share their stories to motivate and inspire others who find themselves in similar positions.

Here follows a poem written at the last session.

BLOSSOMED VOICE

The timeless embrace of a word,
rays of sunshine,
dancing notes.

Soft soothing love like scent :

Jasmine and Frangipani symbiosis.

Lingers like a blooming Yesterday, Today, Forever.

Strong characteristics, yet soft centered.

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR STORY.

Let your voice blossom and
continue to fragrance the world
with your unique scent...

WITH LOVE.



I come from a very diverse culture, and an influential community. Drugs, gangsterism and teenage pregnancies are playing the most important role in everyone's life these days.

BUT I WOULD BEG TO DIFFER ...

Coming from a family where money played the most important role of our lives, really adds a strain to our lives, especially if you are a teenager. Money makes the world go round, and lands people in jail. But growing up, I see that life is about more than just being materialistic. It's about belief, faith, love, support and positive attitude. And especially determination.

Being part of the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project was beyond any programme I have ever participated in. I've met so many wonderful people and I've learned how to become a better leader. Being the influential year it was, being a Grade 11 student, dealing with household difficulties etc. and being part of every programme I could participate in, has inspired me to inspire others. I've learnt so much about the apartheid years, Ashley Kriel being an activist and our diverse cultures. I've learnt how to become a more confident person, and I've learned to trust myself, and the decisions I'll be making. And not to give in to peer pressure and not to let others determine my future because of their own insecurities.

My body map has shown me, there's more to life than meets the eye or rather, there's more to me, than meets the eye. I've been the outcast, in the shadows, a 'geeky' kind of person all my life. And at times I'd doubt myself more than I can count. But I have come to learn what a strong confident and intelligent young woman I am, no matter others' insecurities. I never knew how I was, until being strong was the only option left. My life parents' break-up had a huge impact on the life of my two sisters. Turning to drugs was the only option left to them, but for me school was my only comfort I had left. I've become much stronger since then, and I've even matured more over the time period.

But most importantly I've learnt how to become an excellent leader and role model to people younger and older than myself. There's not much positivity or positive role models in our community (Lavender Hill), even some parents have give in to the life of society and corruption.

Being part of the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project was beyond any programme I have ever participated in



Let me introduce myself in short.

Born and bred in Cape Town, raised in the community called Grassy Park. Can't complain about my upbringing, I was one of those lucky ones that didn't have to suffer poverty or witness any types of abuse in my family – although I was wearing the scars of corporal punishment from school and Madrasa including the emotional abuse for many years. Talk about short introduction.

My Voice ... My Story

Ok, so I am male, coloured, gay, Muslim, 37 years old (still consider myself as youth, 'Peter Pan syndrome'), middle class. Coming back to my little introduction earlier, at primary school I was perceived as dumb, stupid, lazy, incompetent and my reward was getting beaten up by mostly all the teachers I had at primary school, and wetting my bed at night because I was too afraid to go back to school the next day and Mommy said it was a weak bladder. Oh, before I forget, Madrasa was a must in our family so after school Madrasa for you, and there they were not shy to show their compassion if you don't know your Muslim studies. Moving on swiftly! If only everybody knew that I was dyslexic. It would have saved me three years of my life failing at primary school. Finally I made it to high school, and I was glad to leave all the monsters and bad experiences behind and start fresh. I was motivating myself not to fail at high school and completed in 1996. Oh yes! I am the first one on our family who received a Matric certificate. I felt so proudly about myself.

No money for studies. I had to get a job or do something with my life. So I worked with my dad on the construction site, what a joke, more like a tea girl I tell you. I was a manager for a pizza shop and was made manager to run the shop on my own. So that was not going to be the dream job or the career path that I was following. I was destined for much greater. Computer training was the in thing 13 years ago, and it allowed an individual to find a proper job much more easily. I was desperate to complete a course. I found out that New World Foundation in Lavender Hill offered training – Lavender Hill, gangsters' paradise. "Why do you wanna go there?" everybody asked. "They gonna hurt or rob you there." I didn't listen to them. I was on my way to get my computer certificate. Without my knowledge I was introduced to life skills, which was an added component to the course. Oh my word, life skills! It helped me so much developing myself. It taught me forgiveness, understanding, acceptance, how to communicate better, building my self-esteem, meeting new people, sharing of myself and learning from others. I was so glad I decided to enrol for the computer training.

After the three month training I received a call to ask if I don't want to be trained to become a facilitator at New World Foundation. I jumped to the occasion and I was taught how to facilitate a life skills course by the best mentors ever. That is where my leadership journey started. After been mentored and guided by the best I enrolled at UCT for a diploma in



adult learning education. Yes, people: Zain Nazier graduated from the University Of Cape Town! Eat your hearts out, those who called me names, those who said I was stupid, those who said I am not good enough, those who did not believe in me. Just to add I did my social auxiliary workers course and became an assessor as well.

My first biggest role as leader was when I had to lead six youth to Germany as an exchange programme. It was really one of the biggest challenges I had to face but it was one of the best ever. Three years after that I had an opportunity to go to Paris, also on an exchange programme. This time I was all on my own, the Germany experience prepared me for this journey.

My ultimate passion is to work with youth and my other love is to be creative and to create something out of nothing. So in the work that I do I always inject some creativity. Currently I am running an art programme at one of the primary schools, facilitate a drama programme and offer a life skills youth leadership programme to high school learners. I decided to have my own NGO and this year I established my own company where we do training and development.

This year the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project added so much value to the programme that I offered to the youth. Because of my own life experience and situation I know how it feels to be lost and not guided in the right direction, so this job is not just a job, it is my life. I witnessed how the project impacted the lives of my youth: they became more outspoken and opinionated. In essence, they found their voice. They found direction in their career choice as the other participants in the project invited them to universities for open days. The workshops were conducted in an organised and professional manner, and there was a space created for openness, learning, experience that allowed us to go to places where we wanted to go. I wish that the project will grow from strength to strength and that more youth will find their voices.

In my opinion we need to have more programmes like this and also highlight the unsung heroes in our own communities: those who were killed senselessly through gang violence or even those who are doing such wonderful work that they go forgotten. I will make it my mission to honour those heroes in the work that I do.

What is to be a leader? Total dedication and commitment, standing up for what you believe in, listening to the things that are said and what has been unsaid, and follow through in the projects.

My Voice

My voice is a splash of colours of paint.

It's a million different sounds

It's heavy as an element

but can be suppressed and killed
like an ant.

It sometimes reeks when used negatively.

It sometimes smells like a bunch of roses

Sometimes lavender incense as it calms in an instant.

Fresh out of bed breath

uncleaned and not brushed.

A big red fireball

hot hot hot

as pepper

but sweeter when you reach the middle.

**It burns and it brings joy when you play with the sticky, chewy bubblegum flavoured
centre.**

Those who don't understand it can get burnt by its fire

And those who appreciate it find warmth in its red hot blaze.

It's playful at times

Like cotton candy it's soft and fluffy.



My story can **CHANGE** your story...

Where do I start?

Well yes, growing up I was quite something...

I was happy ... often told that I was wild, outspoken and could be quite naughty at times.

My mother was very strict; so strict that sometimes I'd wish she would not return home from work or I'd be happy when she worked a night shift because I knew that I would stay with my aunt we'd have a lot of fun.

She loved me and was overprotective; she was hard-working and played a role of a father as I didn't live with my father. Most of my childhood life I lived with my aunt, my mom and her friend in a one room shack till I finished primary.

I completed primary school at St Paul's Primary School and high school at Gardens Commercial High School. I was fortunate enough to study at such schools and had a father who supported me financially even though we didn't live together. He supported me up until I entered high school, after I got into high school he couldn't support me anymore as he had lost his job, but God blessed me with a stepmother who took over where he left off and supported me and treated me as her own.

Well it's about my life in brief, my experiences, how I let it affect my studies, my being and how and who I am today. I hope my story encourages others to have hope and not to give up. To not let what they've been through put them down and lose hope, for them not to feel sorry about themselves but take the situation as a stepping stone in doing better and working hard to change their state of life.

Well, what is this about exactly?

Well as stated before my mother was always strict, but I think it became a little too much (and, as I thought of it, unnecessary) when we lived together and both my aunt and her friend had moved out and it was just me and her. She was abusive emotionally, and sometimes it became physical. She would get ticked off over the most little things, she was always moody and latched whenever she spoke to me. She never showed me love except when her friends, the family or my friends were around. As a result, I enjoyed school a lot, I'd be happy there, would forget about the life I had back home and would be free; we laughed and had so much fun at school. But when home time came I'd feel numb and a sense of fear would hit because I knew what I was going home to. I didn't want to go there, I didn't want the day at school to end. I'd be relieved when I got home and she wouldn't



be back from work; because I knew that once she got back she would look for something to yell about, something to swear at me for. Sometimes I'd think to myself, "What have I done to her?", "Did she perhaps not want me even from birth?", "Have I constrained her from doing things in her life when I was born?" Sometimes I'd even wish she'd die so that I could live with my aunt and be happy, sometimes I hated her ... But all of that would fade away within a day because at the end of the day she was my mother, she gave birth to me, I lived because of her.

I slept most of the time in tears, or with a broken heart ... I was miserable, I was shown no love and the mother-daughter relationship wasn't there, that bond wasn't there. Yes, she put the food on the table and tried to support me financially, but I needed the love, I needed the moral support and not be treated in such a way. Sometimes I'd even tell her that I wasn't happy and she would tell me to pack my things and go where it would be fun for me, where I would be happy. Sometimes I'd go to my aunt crying not knowing who else to turn to and share my feelings as I didn't have siblings and was ashamed to share with my friends and my cousins. I couldn't even go to my father because that was another part of my life that I tried to ignore and was a problem. He was an alcoholic and also abused me emotionally and physically. I ended up preferring my stepmother over him and would only visit when he was not around or rather go to her family's house where I felt loved and was treated like their own and felt comfortable and happy.

Sometime, up to this day I'll ask myself:



But what I know is that I felt horrible, miserable, lonely and unhappy. I was a hard worker in high school, got many academic merits from Grade 10 up until Grade 12, and I passed my Matric with a code B. Most of my friends had braais, their parents made braais for celebrating the fact they passed, but I didn't have one. In January 2012 I had to register so that I'd be able to further my studies but there was no money for registration. Luckily I had worked during December and used that money for registration. The year went by and the emotional and sometimes physical abuse continued and she would sometimes yell that I spent too much time with my books and didn't want to do anything. I had no source of encouragement nor did I have motivation. I felt alone, yes my aunt, boyfriend and stepmother as well as my other family members were there at times, but I needed my mother to be there for me, I needed her support and motivation. That year I wanted rez sooo badly, I wanted to be away from home and maybe in that way I would be

much happier, maybe I'd get better marks, maybe I would feel better, but unfortunately I didn't get into rez that year. I also wanted to quit school so badly that year because the studies were also playing their part, it became harder for me and I felt like I couldn't do it, like I couldn't pull through but, some of my friends and aunt advised and encouraged me not to give up. The drive I got was from them and my other family members, as well as my boyfriend, and the fact that I want to change the state of living and trend that my family is living and for there to be a second graduate in my family. As a result I managed to pass all of my first year modules; even though the marks weren't what I was capable of; but I passed.

The same thing happened this year (2013) when it was registration time, and I managed to register because I saved some money and my mom had to borrow some money in order for me to be able to register. Luckily this year I got into rez, but things didn't turn out as I anticipated. Yes, I had my own space, but I still didn't feel happy and this time I was away from my aunt and my family and felt even lonelier than before. It took me some time to get used to it and it affected my studies the first semester, but eventually I found my way around things and managed. Yes, I passed all my first semester modules but a whole semester had gone to waste, I could have and was able to do better. But I guess the emotional state I was in clouded everything. Even though it might have been wasting time feeling sorry for myself and letting it affect my studies, but at least now I know where I went wrong and am able to point out the things that I need improvement in. Accepting God earlier this year as my saviour has also helped in dealing with the issues I had last year and has given me the motivation to do better, at least now I know there's always someone I can talk to and whom I know is always there and motivates me. Through faith and working hard as well as being part of the Ashley Kriel Youth Development Project my second semester marks are looking much better and I am proud of myself for not giving up along the way even though I was tempted to do so. I have also started to be involved in other programmes.

However through all that, my mother has changed and I have to thank her for everything – the way she treated me, the beatings and the emotional abuse – because I believe that's what groomed me to be the person I am ... If hadn't been treated the way I had been I wouldn't be who I am today. I probably would not have even furthered my studies and would have ended up like the majority; I wouldn't be that light in my family that's being thought of as an angel ... I probably wouldn't love like I do or have the drive within me to change things and be a better person.

To me, being a leader means being able to overcome the challenges that come and leading others to not see them as challenges but as blessings and stepping stones to being a better person and handle situations differently.

Athabile Matshotyana

As a leader it is very important to first deal with your issues before you lead other people.

From this project I learnt the importance of self realisation.

As an individual I am tied up with many issues that make me lose focus and end up not being able to acknowledge or be present for other people. The road for me has not been easy and my story has never been told.

It is so difficult for me to express myself through painting and I struggle but I felt relieved after I painted the picture. The things that are bothering me in life can be sorted if I can stay focused and break the ropes that are tying me. The light is there and I just need the right attitude and mindset to deal with them. My struggle is written by the seeds of blood and it is that blood that will make me strong tomorrow.

I have shed so many tears and I believe now is the time I rise and shine. As a leader I need to show my strength and share my story in order to inspire other people. I need to acknowledge other people and listen to their stories as well. I believe that the saying "the light comes after the darkness" is true. Leaders have to be tried and tested in order to be strong and to prevail.

The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project has influenced me to confront my past. The project taught me about the history of South Africa, Cape Town and Ashley Kriel as a person. As South Africans we share a common history as a nation and share common goals. The difference is the individual stories.

Some of us have been troubled and ended up with less optimistic thoughts about the future. Youth have turned the Struggle into crime and other negative things. The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project has taught me to look into my story as an individual. How can I tell my story in a way that can change someone else's thinking?

I have a very dark past with lots of things that I want to forget. I aspire to new beginnings. New life and new mindset. I wish I could burn and bury my past with all its resemblance. I wish I could have a happy ending like in the movies. Throughout this project I had a chance to look deep into my past, present and the future. I was encouraged to dream and write down my dreams so that I can reflect on them every day of my life.

The project taught me to share my voice as well. It is very important to consider other people when I am sharing my voice in order for it to be received in a good way. I want my voice to be seen as an open beautiful veld nurtured by fresh water rain. I want my voice to comfort and embrace people with warmth and safety.

I hate my past

Could have been a snake

Could have been a tornado

Goes with a dark cloud

Dangerous and with poison

Unwanted not pretty and scary

I would slaughter and burn the bones

Destroy the resemblance

No one deserves it

Not supposed to be created

Not supposed to be that way

It is a horrible experience

But you at the back unnoticed

Nothing beautiful or inspiring

Evil, hated and lonely

Make me lose hope in life





The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project reminded us about our heritage, our history and inspired us to ensure that the austerities of the past are never repeated again

As it was one of my objectives to get more involved in leadership programmes at the University of the Western Cape, I didn't think twice when I was afforded the opportunity to participate in the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project. I am from Lavistown and I guess a major contributing factor in terms of my participation in the project was the admirable way in which ex-BMW cadres from my hometown speak of him (Ashley). That is one of the reasons why I hate statements like, **"He was the Che Guevara of the Cape Flats"**. Although not many people around the world know Ashley, to me Ashley was Che's equal as they both fought against oppression. The fact that Nelson Mandela acknowledged Ashley after his release from prison meant a lot.

At first I did not know what to expect from the project, but I went with great expectations. I was not disappointed. As a Coloured young man, I was reminded of the crucial role my people played in the struggle for freedom in South Africa. Yet, these same people have been forgotten about and have resorted to average jobs, criminal behaviour and they seldom challenge the status quo in terms of poor service delivery and other social challenges.

Then I mingled with all these young bright minds. These were youth from a plethora of backgrounds. I was instantly inspired through their positive energy. They reminded me that are still people out there who want to see a positive change in society and are willing to make themselves available.

The facilitators (Eleanor and Hilton) were amazing in that they created this unique platform, where you felt comfortable to share your innermost feelings during workshops. The project was structured in a way that we had time to reflect on what we have learned and every time we would come back more energised than the previous time.

The networking opportunities were endless. Through an art workshop, I was introduced to someone who referred me to a theatre production company. I received training and am currently writing my first play. There was never a shortage of inspiration as different guest speakers shared their experiences. One moment that stood out for me was the tour of the District Six (D6) Museum in Cape Town. Our guide, Uncle Joe, told us the stories of his upbringing in the D6. The way in which he engaged us could not be outdone by the same story written in a book.

You realise that you have
A VOICE

Yes, we are labelled as the doomed youth, the lost generation. But just imagine being told that “emva kweminyaka emithathu amaxolo” – meaning you will not survive or success is not for you. With that in mind you lose your voice and stop dreaming because you are even telling yourself that you will never make it.

Then came the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project. You realise that you have a voice. A voice that is strong, courageous yet pleasant, welcoming and that needs to be heard even if you’re not listening. You realise that you have more to offer the world. Your dreams come back and each and every day you are walking closer and closer to your dream. Yes, you realise and acknowledge the effects of the past and in knowing that the past doesn’t determine what you are going to be. You tell yourself, ***“I am not the nobody, not anybody, but Somebody, because I have dreams and I am acting on them”.***

Yes, stop labelling me as the lost generation, I am asking for forgiveness because I have found my path, and if you think this is not this one, ***“Who is lost?”***



You see,
the thing about knowing oneself
is loving oneself
and loving oneself;
well that is beauty

Because it’s when you reach the point where you are content not only with your strengths but also your weaknesses, not only with your heartaches but also your joys, not only your regrets but also your lessons, not only your trials but also your successes that you learn to know who you are. In a fast-paced ever-changing cruel world there is no greater pleasure than self- acceptance and appreciation because it is then that the world may be effortlessly touched by your spirit. Then you are able to see a value in life that is often missed. Go on a journey of reflection so that you may know what it is you carry with you in your heart, as it is the heart that guides everything you do.



Nicole Peters

MY PAST

Lions are strong and brave
My past is a lion
My past is full of grace
It survives
It hunts
It makes me stronger
Strong women lionesses are there
It's good and bad
It is full of happiness
It makes me stronger
It is positive
My past is a lion

My voice it sounds like music
It has a rhythm
It has a clear tone
My voice is mine
I call it my own
It flows like water
It is strong

My voice is inspiration.
It is a song.
It smells like the ocean
Salty and clean.
My voice can be heard and not seen.

It tastes like blueberries
Tart and sweet.
My voice dances to its own beat.
My voice is summer and sun
It's who I am
It's who I will become.
My voice is soft and warm.
It provides shelter from the storm.
My voice is strong but sometimes

Unsure my voice is mine.
My voice is pure.
My dreams
To give back.
To lead and serve
To grow and learn

To live.
I want to be a change agent.
To use my past.
To achieve my dreams.
This is my task.
I have learnt to let go.
To laugh a bit more.
To seek out help when unsure.
To try new things
Take risks, take a chance.
Dare.
To be myself.
To love to care
To lead
To live out my destiny
To be me.

This project has taught me to be
more free and open.

To take more chances.

That I never stop learning. It's reminded me that service leadership is very important to me. It has shown me how great young people in South Africa are. It has also showed me how our stories link up with one another. How we are all similar. That although our differences are important we have similar goals and dreams. This project has taught me to push myself. It has also taught me that as a leader I always need to strive to improve myself. The exchange of ideas throughout the year and the openness of my fellow "Ashley Kriegers" has been inspirational. It has motivated me to keep on pushing myself by surrounding myself with positive people.



Zikhona Ngumela

I am a proud African young woman

I am a proud African young woman. My interest lies in social entrepreneurship, education, community development and investments. I see a lot of opportunities in South Africa. This country has potential. I joined the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project in the hope to empower myself.

Life is a journey
Learning is constant
Empower yourself so
You can empower others

The project was a great platform for me to get in touch with the country's political, social and economic history. The project has helped me to become a responsible citizen of this country.

We sometimes forget
That we have the power
Power to change
Our community issues
But it all starts by being a responsible
Citizen

The project has allowed me to meet other amazing young leaders in Cape Town. I found my voice that I had lost. The busyness of university can distract one from the important things. Being able to express yourself is key in today's world.

For years, my voice,
Was a paper and a pencil
A voice only me
Could understand.
But now my voice
Is bigger than that

I believe that everything happens for a reason and that we are all connected to each other. A human being cannot survive in isolation. I am grateful to have been part of the project for 2013. One needs to find a home outside their house. The project was and is a home to me.

Never conform to this
World's ideas
Challenge yourself
And really think
Not everything you read
Or see is true
Could be true, maybe not
So important

The project allowed me to be mindful of the present, to live in it but not forgetting our history and heritage. I love my country and my fellow citizens. I am excited about the future. The leaders I have met are of high impact.

Footprints, Leave a Legacy ...

A product of the Khoikhoi, San, Bantu and colonisers, my roots lie deep in South African soil. South Africa has a rich history from the 1600s and the arrival of European and Mfecande, to the struggle during apartheid, to what is now known as "Freedom", a democratic country. The history of our country left a profound imprint in our societies today. Our cultures, religion, arts, economy, ethnic groups and social issues were all determined by our history. The critical role of our history was highlighted in the commencement of the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project 2013; interactive history experience was at the core of the workshops. The reflection on South Africa's history shifted me into another paradigm. I appreciate the momentous sacrifices previous generations had made in order for my generation and generations to come to enjoy the shade underneath the tree; the seed/tree they have planted.

The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project has bridged the gap between the history textbooks and the physical remains of our troubled history. It gave me a "real-life" experience of South African history. (A very useful tool that we have been taught is how to use your previous experiences' "history" to overcome your current situations, how to become less doubtful and develop a strong belief in yourself ...)

Almost twenty years after the shattering of apartheid our wounds are yet to heal, if the healing process continues to be delayed. I'm afraid an infection in the wound is inevitable. So we need to decide do we be proactive and treat the wound or allow an infection to manifest, and risk losing a body part? We are at this junction where tough but necessary decisions need to be made. Decisions that will either move our generation forward or backwards. There are several challenges that face our generation: poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, lack of proper housing, education, the increasing gap between privileged and underprivileged, and the list continues. In addition, challenges that the youth face are: identity, lack of opportunities to unleash their talent and potential, lack of mentorship and guidance, and holistic development. The question is asked: how do we overcome these challenges? These challenges are all interlinked. By overcoming these challenges we can restore our human dignity and live our dream.

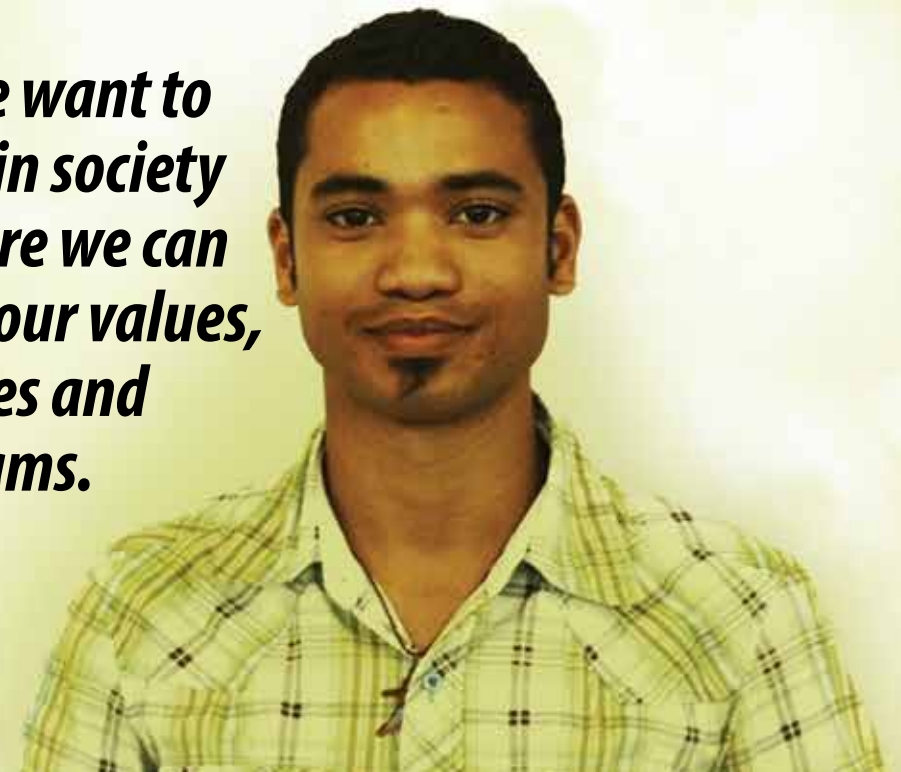
I called that we young people reclaim the "leadership hat" and exercise our rights and responsibilities. The plague of bad leadership across South Africa and the consequences thereof have crippled efforts made in public and private institutions. South Africa has the resources to provide for the needs of its people. We need to learn from previous leaders like Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Chris Hani. We have to learn to work together and not against each other. Creating a mass movement, perhaps a new "African Consciousness Movement", so that we can work together; and not be afraid to let our voices

to be heard. We need to change from within, change the way of thinking in order to create change. We as a nation need to embrace our values, cultures, democracy and bear the responsibility thereof. The large disparity and marginalisation still persists in society and it poses a great threat for the growth of our generation and generations to come. Every citizen plays a critical role in achieving the goals of diversity and equality.

Leaders should be constantly developed; more attention should be given to leadership development. Youth leadership is urgently needed in our societies. Programmes like the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project provide the opportunities to reinforce and deepen leadership among youths across cultures, social and economic backgrounds. The space that was created by the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project enables self-discovery, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and heightens self-esteem. This allows the participants to understand their role as South African citizens, and overcome the challenges at hand. The youth needs mechanisms to unleash their potential, which will enable them to participate in building South Africa. We must use our unique diversity, talents and skills to prosper our society. More importantly, we need to collaborate and engage with each other regardless of race, cultures, social and economic backgrounds.



***I, we want to
live in society
where we can
live our values,
hopes and
dreams.***



I have attended many development programmes during the two years I have been at university, but none has had the emotional impact this programme has had in my life

There honestly has been a paradigm shift in my mental and physical focus in terms of cross-cultural and historical reconciliation in my life. Personally, I was not alive during the pervasive apartheid times but I have definitely learned a lot about the happenings during the apartheid era and more importantly, I have learned tons about the unsung heroes who still exist today as well as those who have since passed.

Secondly, I have also learned how to communicate, reconcile, understand and trust people from a different race, background and educational institution than myself. In addition, I never in a million years ever imagined I could learn anything from high school pupils but let me tell you, by the last session of the programme my face was smeared with tears as I realised I would no longer interact with them on such an honest and safe platform again. I have watched them grow confident, outspoken and optimistic about life and that, on its own, was truly a memory I will carry to my grave.

In closing, the lessons I have learned from this programme span from learning how to compile a comprehensive reflective piece of writing from a combination of reflections from different individuals at the end of each session. I have learned how to communicate and love someone

whom appears to be different than me because I have witnessed that we are all human beings, we experience similar inspirations and ills and therefore we absolutely can relate to one another. Furthermore, I have learned how to loosen up and let go of some of the barriers I had about my life, my mistakes, my lessons and my weaknesses. I learned that it's OK to have internal thoughts of dislike to certain things, to have internal voices discouraging you from unleashing your true potential and that it is, however, NOT OK to listen to those thoughts and allow them to consume your life. Therefore, I have learned too many things to put into words in this document but the biggest lesson of all was finding my inner being and letting her shine through and thus being one step closer to finding my significance in creating a brighter future for my country.

My last words would therefore be that I am truly appreciative of the effort, resources and time that went into sourcing funding for the project, the exceptional facilitators who led us in this journey, historic venues that carried our voices and the inspiring framework that led our discussions in this project.

This was a thought-provoking project that has the potential of changing the mindsets of our youth and therefore, changing the mindset of the new South African generation



I come from a very difficult background, where people judge, talk bad about you and you're never good enough in nobody's eyes.

As I started with the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project it made me a much stronger person than I was before and made me see a brighter future for myself.

People always seem to get it right to get you down, but if we let them get it right then we are probably the "fools" and being taken advantage of. I have overcome so many things in my life. Right now I feel like a much better person. I am me, Annalucia Lucy Sampson, who gave people the right to break me down totally into pieces, but now things are different everything is just about me now. I exist. I have a voice. I am somebody. I feel I can talk to millions of people to tell them my thoughts because it is the thought that counts that makes your mouth move to let people hear your voice. ***Let your voice be heard!*** Make people listen to what you have to say.

As I started being part of the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project, my thoughts were, "This is gonna be boring", but as I attended more and more of these workshops, they made me see life in a very different way and made me a brighter future ahead of me and made me realise that life is too short to be quiet and keep things to yourself that is being selfish.

I earned trust from people. I got rid of all the negativity in my life. Being negative is just you breaking yourself down and that doesn't help you to be strong. You gotta be strong and open to make people see the real person that you are. We are all different and no-one's perfect so why care about what someone else has to say about you. What is important is that you are being you. Although sometimes it is not easy but you gotta keep up and let yourself shine bright. The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project made me realise that I wanna be a true role model and also a great leader and one day I think the youth of today needs great leaders and we can each be one to others and be fearless!!!

***My voice can't be heard
I'm gonna be eaten
I am chased by a lion
I feel fear
I'm worried
Just keep going and going
I can't run away no-more
I will die
I will die***



I did not know what to expect.

When I heard about the IJR, I had no knowledge of the organisation. Also, I never knew who Ashley Kriel was. I was invited to the first session; inquisitive to know what this is about, I decided to attend.

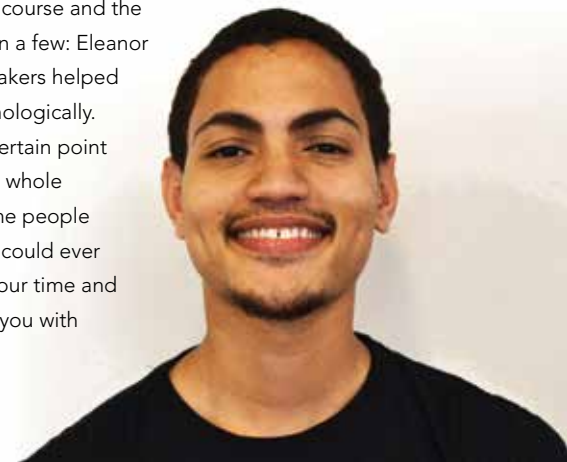
The first session really shattered my ignorance. I felt guilty of not knowing who this icon was. No mention was made of him in history class. I wondered why?? His name deserves to be in our syllabus. The unsung hero from Bonteheuwel.

Uncle Joe was a living piece of District Six. I thoroughly enjoyed his three dimensional presentation on District Six. It made me think and reflect on the struggles and sacrifices he and the likes of Ashley Kriel and many others had to make, for the benefit of the nation. It saddens me that our South African youth of this generation take freedom and many things for granted. Freedom and privacy were a privilege in the apartheid era. We as a youth should show gratitude to our elders. Where would we be if it were not for their courageous strides?

Uncle Joe's story of how they were forcefully removed, struck a chord within me. He informed us that his friend's family was moved to Hanover Park. A year later, the great grandmother of the family passed away. The state claimed that she had died from natural causes. Uncle Joe begs to differ; he believes she died from heartbreak and depression. I love his metaphor and I quote, "You cannot remove an eighty year old tree from the ground and plant it in a new hole, it will die." I was overwhelmed with emotions.

Lemoen Kloof was really amazing. We were able to network with other influential people. We broke off into our various groups and had intense conversations. These conversations were reflective, introspective and meaningful. It fuelled my soul, body and mind. The question the facilitators posed, was bothering me and this was my time to offload this unwanted cargo. "Will racism ever end?" I personally was a victim of racism. Words cannot describe how I felt. You can take away the laws and it can be all good and well on paper but it's not. The apartheid system might be abolished but I believe it is dormant. People still live with apartheid in their hearts and minds. I hope that this will change.

No monetary value could ever be placed on the course and the work that the titans at the IJR do. Just to mention a few: Eleanor and Hilton. They, my fellow peers and guest speakers helped me develop emotionally, intellectually and psychologically. Academics can only develop an individual to a certain point but this course elevated me to another level. My whole being has been nurtured through this project. The people and the project are priceless. I don't know how I could ever repay the IJR staff but I thank you for investing your time and energy. May the Almighty bless you and shower you with endless blessings.



My life before this project

was not all that exciting as it is now

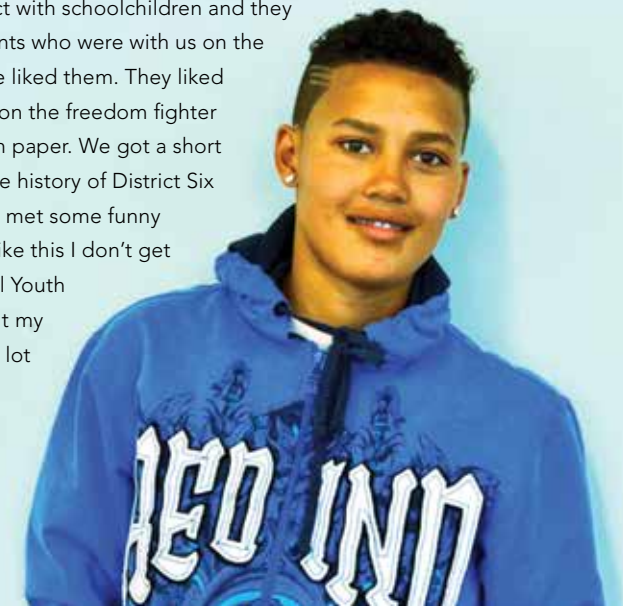
For example, I would have fun but not enjoy it, really it was a waste of time and money. Ever since I joined the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Project life has become all the more interesting. This project has given me a new mindset and has changed the way I go about doing things. It has taught me about my past and what I can expect from the future. This project gave me hope to go on and learn about my history, heritage and what freedom fighting is all about. Before I joined this project I never knew who Ashley Kriel was, let alone what he stood for. Myself as a free South African never knew what the real struggle was about or how it affected my parents which was an upsetting learning curve for a student or even child of my age to understand even if it wasn't to the full extent. My family especially my grandma would speak to me saying that apartheid was worse than now in the present tense yet the children who were born free take advantage of their circumstances.

The Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project taught me about MY history not Russia's, no they taught me about South Africa's history and if I should say that this project has made a few gaps in my history clear and for some reason I felt comfortable in a certain space which was as if it was calling, but if I should be given the opportunity again, I will grab it by both hands and the tail. This is my voice, but it is not our story which is the true voice.



Being part of the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project was an indescribable experience

My school teacher asked me if I wanted to join so I said yes but if I don't like it I am not going to go every time. As you can read I never stopped going because the project really got me addicted. The project kept me away from doing wrong things. In the project we went to a lot of places I didn't know of except UWC. Places where you see new things, meet new people, challenging new things. I've met students from colleges that connected with me. Normally students at college didn't want to connect with schoolchildren and they underestimate schoolchildren. The students who were with us on the project were kind, they were talkative. We liked them. They liked us. I've learned a lot about Hector Peterson the freedom fighter and that helped me in the Afrikaans exam paper. We got a short story about him. I did learn a lot about the history of District Six and saw some cool stuff in the museum. I met some funny people. Normally when I go on projects like this I don't get something out of it but in the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project I've built my confidence up. I couldn't talk in front of a lot of people but now I can. The project has taught me a lot. My expectation was to learn something and I did.



Bismillaa Hie Ragmaa NieRaheem



Like everything else in my life, I start this in the name of my Creator, who put me on this life path. This path where I have met amazing people and the friendships I have developed on this path, will be friendships I will cherish forever. Not only have we, as varsity students motivated high school learners to go beyond Matric, but they have truly inspired me to always want to better myself. Through the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project workshops I have done just that. It is an amazing platform to not only learn about our history and our future but you never stop learning about yourself. Every session reignited that passion to learn and I was able to take something away from each and every one of them. Even if it was something that did not apply to me, I constantly shared it with my family and friends who might be able to benefit from it. I have learnt how much I have to be grateful for and how much I can still do. People always tell me that I am too busy, but when I meet these people and hear about all the remarkable things that they have done, I know that I can still do more!

From day one, Eleanor and Hilton put us at ease, and the fact that the group was so welcoming made everything so much more comfortable. Not once was I afraid to share my feelings or express myself. I had the freedom to say how much or how little I wanted and we were even given the option to say nothing at all. I never had to worry about being judged and even though the journey got very emotional at times, not once did I feel even the least bit awkward. Everyone could be themselves without worrying what the next person might think of them. I always say that I never want to be liked for something I'm not. Not that I prefer to be unliked, but I will stand up for myself, defend loved ones and never betray my morals and values. Values instilled by family and reiterated throughout this project.

It is hard to look back at my journey and choose a favourite session. OK not hard, impossible! Every session brought something different, from listening skills, to rediscovering our history to shouting out our dreams. I am also getting better at not letting people take advantage of me and without being selfish, do things that benefit me for a change. We have learnt to be less judgemental; no one knows what somebody has been through just by looking at them. I have learnt to be proud of where I come from and be steadfast in where I am going. We have learnt about being positive and not letting other people determine where I will be in future. I am the

driver of my bus, with Allah as my navigator and my family as my lighthouses and landmarks; I will get to where I need to be. I chose a bus because I want to be able to take people with me, even if they don't want to go to the same place, and I have to drop them off along the way, I will feel so much better knowing that I have helped them get there!

The project has definitely been one of my highlights and the lessons that I've learnt and the people that I've met will be etched in my heart forever. I do not want to mention names for fear of leaving people out, but there are people I feel who need to be acknowledged for being a part of my growth and development this year: Eleanor and Hilton, two of the warmest people I have ever come across. The other facilitators we have met along the way, Toni, Leilah, Carolyn, Gina and Mr Esau of course. Then also each and every person that was on the project with us, your stories will be mentioned in my autobiography one day. Miss T (Tonia Overmeyer), Monique, Arnold, Sashley and Anga: you will never know how much your faith and support have carried me through this year! My biggest supporters: my Granny Farieda, My father Irifaan, my mother Zaida, my brother Faiz, my sister Fatima, my older sister Farieda, my brother-in-law Moegamat, my brand new nephew Taariq and my best friend and companion Gary-Jon. Yes, they complain about the amount of time I spend away from home, but they are always proud of me and 100% behind me in everything I do. I love you all.

Shukran. Thank you. Dankie. Enkosi. Arigatou.

Danke. Merci beaucoup.

MY VOICE

My voice, it looks Dr Banner
Or better known as Incredible Hulk.

Smart, wholesome and your average girl.

But when I need to defend myself, my voice will rock this world.

My voice, it has a minty scent
Some find it very soothing
A bit of freshness, laced with a hint of success,
I only say things I can back up, no more and no less.

My voice, it tastes like garlic butter mussels and prawns
The best thing I have ever tasted
People take in every word,
Not a drop of it is wasted.

My voice, it feels just like a sponge
Soft on the one side and hard on the other
I'm able to soothe things over and absorb people's feelings.

And when needs be, my green side makes me tougher.

My voice: loud and proud
Take heed of every word.

No matter what the situation
My voice will be heard.

MY ANIMAL

It would be weird
Equating myself with a jaguar
Tough and resilient
Strong and fierce
Graceful and caring
Bad experiences
Get away from everything
Someone takes care of them
Experience may require me to
Not always take things seriously.

Sithembile Malinga

Being on the project I would put it this way, God's plan

I ended up on this project by mistake and it is just one of those mistakes I am happy that happened. I have never been more conscious about myself, my family and the world around than I have at this point in my life and all this is because of this project.

This project has made me look at myself, look deep into who and what I am. My identity as a black female in the new South Africa and in Africa. Made me question in terms of why I think the way I do, the way I behave and view things and people around me.

Having to go through myself and taking a good look at who Sithembile Malinga is and what makes her the individual she is, which I think is the most important discovery a human being can know about themselves. Has allowed me to then be about to scan and view and want to understand those around me asking the same questions unto them as I have done to myself.

Knowing that I then am able to look at the rest of the world and want to understand it and be able to identify where in the picture I want to place myself, thus finding my purpose and the role I can play and really master in my existence in this world.

This project has really stripped me naked of any masks, fears and questions I struggled with. It has influenced me into wanting to be more engaged in what's happening and what's not happening around me that should or should not.

I am more curious and more determined in the dreams I want to achieve and the difference I want to make in my community and amongst the youth. It has encouraged me to think, ask questions and speak and that no voice is not worth listening to.



Sinayo Mandi

THE JOURNEY that we travel on this life IT IS UNKNOWN

A normal Monday afternoon has turned into an experience of a lifetime. As a student I was at school as usual when a classmate of mine, Sibulele Zcina, asked us to accompany her as the people who were supposed to go could not due to personal reasons. That is when my journey began.

The journey of discovering who I am and what power I have as a person, being a young South African. At this time it comes with a lot of privileges and opportunities and being on the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project has been one of those opportunities.

During this journey that I have taken, I have discovered the power of my voice in myself and the people around me. My voice cannot be seen or touched but it can be heard and unless I voice it out to be free, flawless and touchless it will be forgotten and fade and one of the things that I have learned on this project is to let my voice be heard and let it impact the life of others positively.

Yes, the journey is still far from being over but I took my first step of letting my voice be heard and I believe that as one step of great leadership that this country needs, mapping your journey in life, it begins from within. If you do not voice out, you will not be heard. The future of this country depends on the boldness of our voice. Not as an individual but as a youth of South Africa. Let us voice out and be heard. Let our voice be free.



Simasele Sobuwa

Liyancenceza Okwamanzi

Water from the river

Njengengxolo yemoto kodwa liyavakala kumntu wonke

That is next to me,

Ooh ilizwi lam lifana njenge

Salt in food

Nice flavour

Belizonuka okwe tswele endlini kwaphakiwe

Ingafana nelitye ngoba soze likudanise

Ndithi lona ilizwi lam liyandomeleza kwimbandezelo



My name is Simasele Sobuwa but I prefer to be called Sima: that means beauty. I was born in 1990 on June 19th.

I grew up in the Eastern Cape and moved back to Cape Town in 1999 when I started my primary school and high school. I finished my matric in 2009. I grew up wanting to be a lawyer. I was an active young person who liked to talk and I was involved in different things such as basketball, netball and peer education.

I grew up with my sister and my mother, where my mother was a bread winner without the job, I grew up as a bread winner without the job, I grew up as a young person who wants to change the way we live. My mother didn't have money to take me to tertiary level but she strove for help and found a place called Tsiba (Tertiary School in Business Administration). This is where I applied for my tertiary level which I started in 2011 and this year I am doing my second year in business administration.

There were many challenges that I faced as a young person. My background made it very difficult for me to study. Challenges that I faced at home and at school force you to stay focused.

In Tsiba I have been studying leadership for three years and it has taught me how to be a leader. For me a leader should be someone who is able to learn from their mistakes and who is able to admit these mistakes. Someone who leads as an example. Umtu onesidima nesithozeko. Who has integrity. Onembeko umntu onganyolukanga okwaziyo ukulansela abanye abantu, umntu okuna ubona utshintsho kwabanye abantu.

There were many times when things were not going well with me. Because I feel like how can I fail subject for two times, meaning that I am stupid and dumb and also that I won't make it to the top. I changed my attitude and rethink in a positive way – that God never lets you see suffering and that maybe God has something better waiting for me. So I used my anger to write a poem to be motivated.

The advice that I will give to youth is that you have to be strong and try to live your life as you want to and also try to make sure that your life impacts other people or your community in a good way and also try to make your dreams come true.

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