

Top 8 youth wonders under 30

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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Over the holidays I was reading a book, spending some time at the pool with my husband and our fur babies, laughing and being silly. I found my mind drifting away towards my younger self and all my worries, recognising in that current moment, was a moment I have always dreamt of. I am living it now. I have worked hard for it.



Top (l-r): Lerato Dumisa, Lotang Mokoena, Lusanda Worsley, Whade Williams. Bottom (l-r): Rebone Masemole, Dorcas Dube, Kate Maxwell, Abongile Silonga.

I kept this “time vault” with my hopes and dreams, my fears and frustrations, my purpose, where do I want to be 10 years from now? The “time vault” was handed over to me by my mom when I finished school and said to me, “write it all down and put it in this vault. Your Goals. Your Dreams. Your Fears. Your future self will appreciate it one day.”

I decided to open it over the holidays for the first time.

These words I wrote to myself on 22 June 2001 on my 22nd birthday:

“ I wish someone can see the potential in me as I see in myself, that’s all I want for my birthday. ”

At that moment, I decided that is exactly what I am going to do for our future leaders. Let’s take a moment to recognise our youth and the great things they are doing and support them along their journeys.

I am a woman of action. When I want to do something, I get down to it. I started a public nomination that day for the top youth wonders in South Africa under 30. After many nominations received, we then identified the top 8 and allowed for the public voting to happen and we received thousands of votes.

The public has spoken and here are the Top 8 Youth Wonders under the age of 30 years old:

1) Whade Williams, founder CEO at Starting of a Dream Foundation

Why is the work you are doing so important to you?

"How do my dreams change the lives of others?", Something I have asked myself. This pushed me to share my story of 'challenges' and 'successes' but to also help others live their dreams. It's important for me to help underprivileged youth by showing them that anything is possible by offering, financial, active support and education.

Helping them empower themselves, giving them the drive to make their dreams a reality. To me a positive change in someone's life can shape the future of an entire community, hence I take what I do so seriously.

If you had a magic wand, what change would you bring?

I would want to bring change by reducing the unemployment rate by developing sustainable SME's, creating jobs which will help stabilise and strength our economy.

What is your biggest 'aha moment' of your career?

Developing and hosting 'Change The Nation Campaign' made me realise that I've started something that can truly, positively build the next generation.

If you had a room packed with thousands of delegates, what would your message be?

Don't live a life that satisfies your present day 'BUT' build a life that will guarantee you, a future.

2) Lotang Mokoena, strategist at VML South Africa

Why is the work you are doing so important to you?

I believe my message is important because we need to raise awareness to the fact that our worth as black people is not determined by a white man's choice to identify us, to acknowledge us or to even put us in their narratives. There's a new generation of black people coming up that the world was never prepared for. Our history as black people might not be accurately documented but our future is being currently written and we are coming for everything.

If you had a magic wand, what change would you bring?

I want the world to know that black representation is not about mimicking white narratives it's about us creating our own.

What is your biggest 'aha moment' of your career?

My career has taught me the importance of being consistent in what I believe as people won't be receptive the first time around.

If you had a room packed with thousands of delegates, what would your message be?

We can't expect change to happen if we still operate in western systems, we need to first deconstruct the world

3) Rebone Masemola, TEDx speaker, marketer, activist writer and founder of Woke Project

Why is the work you are doing so important to you?

This is important because women who are young and black have already spent and exhausted enough time fighting and trying to assimilate and blend into spaces and institutions that were never designed to fit people like themselves for too long.

It is now time to change the narrative by creating the kind of world we want to live in. This work serves to redefine what the idea of 'a seat at the table' looks like, and ensures that the next generation grows up in a world that reflects the diverse stories and the realities of people like them.

If you had a magic wand, what change would you bring?

I would make the world a more empathetic place where there isn't such a thing as marginalised communities, where no one is negotiating their humanity.

What is your biggest 'aha moment' of your career?

My 'aha moment' thus far has been getting the opportunity to stand on a TED stage to speak about a cause I am really passionate about and having the audience relate on a personal level. It was such a moving and affirming experience to be able to stand there and share stories women from different backgrounds could collectively relate to.

If you had a room packed with thousands of delegates, what would your message be?

Everyone's humanity matters, in spite of who they are and where they are coming from. The world can only be just when everyone feels free to be their truest-self.

4) Dorcas Dube, marketing and communications manager at Symphonia for South Africa

Why is the work you are doing so important to you?

I am first and foremost a proud African, passionate about our continent and truly believe in the massive potential of our people that are waiting to be released.

My passion for the development of future leaders motivates me to go the extra mile and be part of a solution to the education crisis through finding innovative ways of improving the quality of education for ALL our children.

It is incumbent upon us to turn the tide, firstly to prioritise basic education and ensure that all learners can read for meaning as well retain the majority of learners up to matric. Moreover, we need to equip learners to be able to compete in the job market to assist address the crippling unemployment rate.

5) Kate Maxwell, co-founder, strategic director at Overt

Why is the work you are doing so important to you?

I knew at the outset that I didn't want to fall into the same tried-and-tested ways of operating. Overt has created an opportunity for me to apply strategic and creative rigour to everything that I do.

It has unlocked my ability to think beyond the constraints of the agency service list and has created scope to consider bigger, bolder solutions. I find fulfilment in what I do: it allows me to pursue purpose and to deliver work that is meaningful at

both a business and human level.

6) Lerato Dumisa, brand manager: Sunlight South Africa at Unilever

What is your biggest 'aha moment' of your career?

About 5 months ago, I got my own 'aha moment'. An image that I had posted of myself inadvertently stirred a wider conversation around body image confidence for girls. I was seeing the same issues that I had been dealing with 13 years ago when I turned the TV on to see Oprah and learning that 1 in 2 girls in the world deal with this.

I want to help change this and have come to learn that I don't have to be a big heritage or global brand to do my bit in changing the narrative around this. It starts with sharing my story of overcoming and hopefully that will encourage others to do the same. Working with young girls with body issues isn't always easy but showing them how to love themselves despite their imperfections is certainly rewarding.

7) Abongile Silonga, digital marketing specialist at Wits DigitalCampus

If you had a magic wand, what change would you bring?

I would bring "digital" to disadvantaged communities so that they too can have full access to the digital age.

8) Lusanda Worsley, founder and managing director of Empire, an experiential marketing agency

What is your biggest 'aha moment' of your career?

When I realised that advertising is not just salesperson creative art form. It has the power to influence our consciousness and how we impact the world."

Now, congratulations to each and every one of you and for all the youth out there making a difference. There is one common thread in everyone's story. They want to change the narrative.

Let us help lead and support these young leaders. Lift as you Rise. Be the Change. Recognise our future leaders and help me share this as wide as possible so we can make a change in their lives and open up opportunities for our youth!

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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