

Emerging Old Rhodian Award Nondumiso (Noni) Hlophe

The daughter of civil servants, Nondumiso (Noni) Hlophe was born on Christmas Day 1986 in New York, USA. Over the years, she has called the United States, Denmark, South Africa and Malaysia home but "home-home" (as she affectionately calls it) always has been and always will be the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Nondumiso Hlophe completed her Bachelor of Social Sciences with Honours in Political and International Studies at Rhodes, concentrating on International Relations. While at Rhodes, Nondumiso was elected Chairperson of the university's Amnesty International chapter and represented the Eastern Cape Province at Amnesty International South Africa. She also served as co-organiser, facilitator and mentor to young girls from underprivileged backgrounds with the Young Women's Dialogue, a sub-programme of the Pan African Youth Dialogue, an NGO founded and based in Grahamstown. She was also a volunteer with Rhodes' Community Engagement Centre for several years, winning an essay competition where she proposed that all students at Rhodes should volunteer in order to be eligible for graduation.

Since 2011, she has been a One Young World Ambassador for Swaziland and is the Founding Curator of the Mbabane Hub of the Global Shapers Community, a World Economic Forum initiative. A registered Non-Profit in Swaziland, the Mbabane Hub has been instrumental in involving youth in promoting bilingual literacy, dialogue on pertinent issues aimed at those under 30 and environmental awareness within the greater Mbabane area. In 2012, she organised the Swaziland section of the "One Young World initiative" "Wake up Call", a global campaign with thousands of young people around the world calling on their political and business leaders to wake up and take action for a cleaner environment, political accountability, better healthcare, education and equality for all. Professionally, Nondumiso has served as a consultant to several advisory boards and consultancy firms on youth matters, most recently to Nexus. Nexus is an international collaboration of youth-serving organizations, facilitating intergenerational partnership in global decision making –chiefly on matters related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with Hlophe serving as an Associate for Nexus Africa. She also serves as an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

In June 2015, Nondumiso was one of the 60 inaugural recipients who were presented leadership awards by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in London. The Queen's Young Leaders Programme celebrates the achievements of young people who are taking the lead to transform the lives of others and make a lasting difference in their communities in the Commonwealth of Nations.

Nondumiso passionately believes that there are three key issues to shaping the world in the Twenty-First century, education, equality (especially for women and those with disabilities) and youth empowerment. She believes that educating and empowering girls is the gateway towards a better society, and that it has a direct impact on their communities. Youth empowerment is important to the world at large, because in future, they must be best prepared engage and lead on pertinent issues. She is also passionate about advocating for the rights of adults with disabilities and how communities and countries can make society more inclusive for all its citizens. Equality for all is vitally important for the world to progress, thrive and reap the benefits of a fulfilled life.

Nondumiso is a selfless individual who has devoted herself to working in the community. Her life experience has been the greatest motivator in her life to ensure that she has done her part towards ensuring that we are one step closer to equality, one community at a time. She has high values, is confident, determined and a true leader, with the ability to inspire and change the lives of fellow Africans. Her ethos to liberate and empower others to succeed makes her a perfect candidate for the Emerging Old Rhodian Award.