

Lerato Modishane-Magongo steers her own destiny, thanks to past braveries

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Lerato Modishane-Magongo didn't discover her love for law right out of high school - in fact, it was only after spending five years as a credit analyst, armed with a BCom Statistics and Honours in Financial Management University of Pretoria, that she realised her true passion lay in the legal sector.



Lerato Modishane-Magongo, Candidate Attorney, Baker McKenzie Johannesburg

Now a candidate attorney with Baker McKenzie Johannesburg, Modishane-Magongo says, "While working in banking, I decided to study BCom Law part-time, as I realised I hadn't quite found what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and wanted to see what else was out there. I fell in love with law, decided to quit my job and went back to UP to study LLB full-time.

“ What drew me to law is how it is a part of our everyday lives, and that it regulates what we do and our interactions with each other. The beautiful and yet scary thing about it is that it is determined, defined and interpreted by us humans and shaped by societal norms. ”

Here, as part of [Bizcommunity's Youth Month features](#), Modishane-Magongo gives thanks to those who paved the way for her own journey, while acknowledging the struggles of the current generation who are expected to "achieve it all".

■ **What is the significance of Youth Day to you, as a young attorney?**

This day is a reminder that many young people who look like me did not have the opportunity to explore their full potential. Laws of their day and the society they grew up in had a pre-destined future for them and there was very little they could do to escape it, but they decided to take a stand. This day reminds me that where I am today, the opportunities I have and the fact that I steer the direction of my destiny is thanks to their bravery and foresight that change was possible and necessary.

■ **What do you feel is the most important right young people have today?**

Human dignity. Section 10 of the Constitution states: *"Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."*

I feel this an all-encompassing right which gives life to many more rights, such as the right to education, housing, equality, privacy, freedom of association and to generally be treated in humane manner and be allowed to live a dignified life.



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What is one of the liberties you are grateful for today that weren't available to, or were hard-won by earlier generations?

Freedom of movement. I am grateful that I am able to share spaces with different people from all walks of life and I can go almost anywhere in our beautiful country or the world, without restricted access based on my race, gender or beliefs. There is a whole world to explore and I appreciate that I can go out and see it.

Older generations often comment that the youth today "have it easy", but it's not necessarily true. What are some of the challenges youth are currently experiencing that other generations may not understand?

The youth currently faces the struggle of living up to the expectation of being the generation that has to "achieve it all" because we are seen as having every opportunity at our disposal. Trying to figure out our own purpose, wishes and goals while living up to the expectation of immeasurable greatness from those that came before us, against the backdrop of socio-economic challenges, such as high youth unemployment in South Africa, can be rather daunting. We are further challenged by the fact that we live in very different times to those of our elders, where social media further pressurises us to aspire to unrealistic standards of perfection.

Thus, wanting to live up to the expectations of peers, elders and self poses a threat to the mental health of the youth, which is further exasperated by the socio-economic issues of our country. Although the conversation around mental health is gaining momentum, I think we require a better understanding of the significance of mental health and taking care of our mental health.

Share one piece of advice given to you by an elder...

Always strive to be the best version of yourself.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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