

The responsibility that comes with being the first

By [Millycent Mashele](#), issued by [SAICA](#)

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Kamala Harris made history for being the first black female US vice-president elect. Most of us as young professionals have become the first in our communities or families to graduate, to qualify, or to be a finalist in the Saica Top 35 Under 35 competition. This is commendable and a great personal achievement; it's worth a celebration. It's proof of personal resilience, patience, and determination, writes Millycent Mashele, founder and managing director, The Legacy Centre.

Being the first should be taken as a responsibility provided by the journey of representing others looking up to you – a responsibility to lead with authority yet with humility as you lead others to achieve more than what you have achieved. To be that person who demands to see positive change in the boardroom, to inspire initiatives that change the narratives of others. Becoming a champion of success knowing you represent many and that your actions affect those that come after you.

Instead of being individualistic in our achievements, we should adopt a community approach that celebrates success. Responsibility comes with actions. As you wake up every morning, you must be aware of the impact that your decisions have in driving positive change. To be the beacon of hope, to be the light that cannot be dimmed.

Most of us shy away from taking bold and courageous steps because we presume that we need to be humble about it. However, humility is an action of grace and awareness and not hiding from the responsibility to impact and create change.

The responsibility that comes with being the first does not only bring hope to others, but it also includes a higher sense of purpose and a moral capacity to be ethical at all cost. It calls for excellence in the work we choose to do, to use the knowledge and skills acquired to benefit the rest of the community. It is a call to think of others more than you think of yourself. It is a responsibility to lead on paths never walked before; after all, *you are the first*. Being the first exposes you to fear of the unknown. Choose to do it with faith for a better tomorrow and for the next generation. You are the builder who is responsible for laying the first brick for building a strong foundation in the field you are in.

I am humbled to be that village girl who dared to walk roads less travelled and to undertake actions that scared the hell out of me. To fail forward as I represent many village girls and boys with the hope for a better future. It's a responsibility I embrace daily with humility, grace, and love for the work I do. We all need to reflect on being first and take bold daily action to represent many.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Millycent Mashele is the founder and managing director of The Legacy Centre.

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