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20 July 2021

UCT selects first Uyinene Mrwetyana Scholarship recipient

“God, let it be positive,” is what Luhlanganiso Majebe remembers muttering under her breath as a new email popped into her inbox. The sender was Associate Professor Shose Kessi, the dean of the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) Faculty of Humanities, and as luck would have it, good news was the order of the day.

“It is my pleasure to inform you that your application for the Uyinene Mrwetyana Scholarship in 2021 has been successful,” read the opening line of the email. Majebe said the email confirmed what she and her family had been praying for, and she has never been more grateful. The Uyinene Mrwetyana Scholarship was established in honour of the late Mrwetyana – a first-year UCT student whose life was cut short by her brutal murder in 2019. The scholarship is an initiative of the Faculty of Humanities and has been set up in partnership with UCT’s Development and Alumni Department.

“I feel honoured, humbled and privileged that I have been selected to receive this scholarship. I don’t take this decision lightly, because I am well aware of the responsibility that now rests on my shoulders,” an excited Majebe said.

Wrap-around funding

The scholarship is aimed at financially eligible students in the Humanities faculty. It provides wrap-around funding – covering tuition, textbooks, accommodation, and health and wellness – for the duration of the recipient’s undergraduate degree programme.

Majebe is a first-year social science student, majoring in political studies and sociology, and she’s relieved and thankful that her application made the cut. She said the scholarship is “extremely important”, for a number of reasons: it offers her the opportunity to study towards the degree of her choice in a field that fascinates her; and it provides a platform for her to raise awareness of the scourge of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa, and to preserve Mrwetyana’s memory.

“It is important that everyone understands the impact Uyinene’s tragic passing has had on UCT, South Africa and society. This scholarship is a way of propagating her legacy within the university, and to help fight GBV,” said Majebe.

Giving back

Majebe said part of the scholarship agreement is that she needs to contribute to the work of the Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation. This necessitates that she enlists to volunteer at a non-profit organisation (NPO) whose work addresses GBV at community level. She is in the process of signing up with The Justice Desk, an award-winning human rights NPO that aims to empower, educate and equip members of society with the necessary tools to become agents of change, and to understand their human rights. The NPO has several projects on the go, but Majebe is keen to contribute to the Mbokodo Club, which provides self-defence classes to survivors of GBV.

However, as a result of the current third surge of COVID-19 infections in the country, and the adjusted Level 4 lockdown, she's not yet started this important work.

"I am excited to get started, and to give back in my own way," she said. "My work with The Justice Desk will further cement the solid foundation I aim to set for future Uyinene Mrwetyana Scholarship recipients. I am utterly grateful for this opportunity."

Written by Niémah Davids, UCT News



Luhlanganiso Majebe

Photo: Lerato Maduna/UCT

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