

Meet young voice Oarabile Tlhabane

 By Jessica Tennant

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In the run-up to the 23rd Prism Awards to be announced virtually on Friday, 15 May, we chatted to this year's cohort of 'young voices' about their fresh approach to the judging process.

In this series of interviews, we find out what they've learnt working alongside the cluster judges (albeit remotely) and what their young minds bring to the virtual table.



2020 Prism Young Voices announced!

PRISA 13 Feb 2020



"The cancellation of the Awards was very unfortunate because I was personally looking forward to "Africa's most sought after public relations and communication awards" and getting to mingle with the rest of the Prism Awards Young Voices 2020, the senior judges and seeing all the individuals attending the Awards. I was looking forward to networking with other like-minded and strong fellow young voices, and the excitement that comes with being exposed to a range of efforts and work. I was looking forward to hear from other 'young voices' and being exposed to the different and innovative campaigns from different PR agencies.

"The coronavirus has caused us to be more proactive than ever. However, it is important that PR professionals convey consistent and accurate information about the pandemic to their consumers. Industry professionals should focus on creating and sharing content that accurately informs their consumers about the current climate of the world and not cause fuelled concerns. This is the time where brands should use their social influence to empower their target audience with information." – Content creator and public relations specialist, Oarabile Tlhabane, commenting on the cancellation of the physical Awards and the general impact of the pandemic on the industry.



Oarabile Bontle Tlhabane

Here, our interview with Tlhabane...

■ ***What does this recognition and opportunity mean to you?***

This opportunity really speaks to my growth as a young public relations professional. The industry is an ever-changing one and I believe that as it shapes-shifts, I do so with it. Participating in these substantial industry Awards enables me to accelerate my growth in the PR world even further and to harness my skills while I acquire new and beneficial ones. The recognition allows me to truly showcase the qualities and potential that I have as a public relations professional. With this platform I am exposed to the different aspects that exist within the industry. You get to see the bigger picture.

Part of my life motto is to never go into a year and get out of it being the same person with the same skills. That is why I wanted to be part of the Prism Young Voices team, to add a vibrant and young perspective while simultaneously acquiring knowledge from the industry's greatest.

■ ***Briefly tell us about your experience in the industry.***

You have to be flexible if you are going to survive this evolving industry. You have to be made for it. There is a certain thrill that comes with it, the feeling of accomplishment that you get after achieving certain deliverables. My passion to translate brand ideas into understandable content for target audiences gives me absolute pleasure.

I am best described as a strong-willed young professional who is hard-working, competent, detail-oriented, dedicated to making the most of my educational background and skill set, as well as a key component in the ever-changing public relations world, as per my flexible nature. I say this because throughout my career at Ditshego Media I have had the experience of acquiring the skills of events coordinating, content creation, graphic design, social media management, photography and media liaison. Having volunteered for the Prism Awards in 2019, I had the opportunity to experience the nature of the Prism Awards environment and have envisioned myself working with both the young and seasoned strategic communication professionals.

■ ***Comment on the judging process.***

It is all positively overwhelming and thought-provoking. You literally have to place yourself in different shoes with each entry due to the different products and services that each campaign offers, which is essentially part of my day-to-day job. You have to be in tune with yourself during this process because your perspective is highly valued as a Prism Awards Young Voice. I am inspired by the different personalities that are able to come together as one to pull off a spectacular industry event.

■ ***What has the response been to this year's entries?***

It was a tough competition. I wish all campaigns that entered all the best.

■ ***What makes winning work stand out?***

Showing that you understand a brand goes a long way, and that reflects in the story that is being told throughout the campaign. Are the judges going through your entry able to connect the dots even when they have not been exposed to the brand? That for me is the wow factor. Is the brand you represent able to stay at the top of the consumers mind? Detail is important.

The winning work is clear in what the brand stands for, and stays true to the brand promise and its personality. Are you going beyond the tangible attributes of your campaign? Brand sentiment speaks to how authentic the story of the campaign is and how well the target audience was reached. A good story is not just something to read on a page — it's an experience. At the end of the experience, there must be some kind of change and impact from the beginning.

■ ***What do you think young minds bring to the table?***

Young people bring fresh and unique ideas to the table, which enhances the ability to think up creative solutions. We are

able to contribute to grassroots efforts in order to conceptualise long-term innovation.

We have the creativity, the potential and the capacity to make change happen effectively. We have fresh ideas that enable us to understand the importance of new communication forms, and the essence of simplicity while having a huge impact.

▣ ***What have you learnt working alongside the cluster judges?***

I have to come to learn the essence of effective and timeless communication, and the importance of being clear in every message that brands send out to their consumers. The cluster judges I worked with are all respected and seasoned professionals within the industry who truly inspire me to do more as a young PR professional, they are knowledgeable powerhouses too.

▣ ***What would the title of Prisms Young Judge for the 2020 awards mean to you?***

Being the Prisms judge for the year 2020 would mean an immense deal for me.

Working with innovative professionals like I have in the industry has allowed me to be the young, curious and innovative professional that I have become. I possess thought leadership qualities and I am constantly up to date with research, news and understanding the ever changing needs of the media space. Winning this award would not only be an honour, but would also highlight my growth and the impact that I have come to have. It would mean that I have the capacity to have a impactful voice in the industry and to fairly and holistically understand different brands, campaigns and the effectiveness of different companies.

It would also mean that going forward, I have a big part to play in the South African PR industry, and it would also emphasise my role in shaping the future of the next generation of PR and marketing leaders.

▣ ***Comment on the current state of PR.***

In the current day, the advancement of technology has played an immense role in innovation. This includes access to social media, analytics, innovative campaigns, new ways of getting communication across, diverse talent, as well as easy access to vast information. One of the biggest advancements in PR has been digital campaigns. This has been fuelled by several things, including an increase in online publications (news getting out quicker), the digital space, openness to feature and opinion contributions, and being able to get access to news at a much faster rate.

Crisis communication is on the rise in almost all areas of expertise. The interest in global crisis communication continues to increase and the rapid nature of social media contributes to the need for more public relations professionals to understand international crisis communication. The frequency in which brands need to manage crisis communication is increasing. This questions whether public relations professionals have prepared proactive strategies for the brands they work with. The overall tone of a brand during a crisis matters too, you want to avoid sounding insensitive and too business-orientated.

Meaningful engagements such as niche PR are becoming more impactful despite the introduction of new technology. Organisations are becoming selective in terms of the PR professionals that they work with, based on what they specialise in. Micro-influencers are also playing a crucial role in a significant amount of campaigns as they become more within reach with target audiences.

As mentioned, the Awards take place on Friday, 15 May. Follow us on [Twitter](#) for live updates and visit our [Prism Awards special section](#) for other related content and a list of all the winners following the announcement. Here's the link to our other [social media](#) pages, as well as the Prism Awards' [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts. Follow Oarabile Tlhabane on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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