

Meet young voice Nombulelo Fox

 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!

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"It is unfortunate that we won't get to meet the who's who of the PR industry at the Prism Awards this year, however, knowing that our industry is becoming and is currently quite digitally advantaged, it won't really impact the credibility of the Awards themselves. Perhaps that's where the future of the Awards should be going. It's great that these awards could still happen despite the Covid-19 outbreak and will allow people to normalise the digital way of working and socialising, even after the virus has disappeared. People just need to ensure that their workforce is trained well to keep up with all these changes so that they too can still remain employed, should another pandemic come about." – Content creator Nombulelo Fox, commenting on the cancellation of the physical Awards and the general impact of the pandemic on the industry.



Nombulelo Fox

Here, our interview with Fox...

What does this recognition and opportunity mean to you?

This recognition means a lot to me because it is giving me a chance to be part of the Prisms and is shaping my understanding with regards to what our industry is doing and to keep abreast with how brands are helping solve issues across several sectors and developing strategies that can drive longevity in their impact.

Having worked in the FMCG sector, it's been interesting to see how people think and the solutions that come from problems and opportunities that people encounter on behalf of their brands and clients.

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

I'm in my fourth year of working in the PR industry, specifically agency work. I started my career off working as an intern at award-winning agency Atmosphere Communications, where I worked my way up to an account executive. I worked across several clients, such as Hasbro, Red Bull, PepsiCo, Spotify and Unilever. I then spread my wings and worked at Hill + Knowlton Strategies as a media relations specialist in the consumer and technology department. Although it was quite brief, I still wanted to work more closely with the brand. My move to Plato Communications was a great one and allowed me to be more involved with South Africa's biggest confectionary brands. Serving as a PR account manager now at Plato, this experience has given me a chance to learn about other marketing disciplines and integrated ways of working alongside other agencies.

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

The judging process has been quite interesting in that I was asked to judge categories that I had never worked on throughout my experience. It has allowed me to learn about what other people are doing for their brands and not be close-minded to the amazing work that people are putting into their entries. Judging isn't easy, especially when you see an amazing calibre of entries and you just want to make everyone win.

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

Amazing! A bulk of the entries are nothing short of amazing. It's beautiful to see how innovative the entries are, especially for categories such as Health and Resources, where a lot of people wouldn't think there's many creative solutions to help drive impact in those sectors. I thoroughly enjoyed judging those entries because they shifted my expectation.

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

A beautifully written entry (writing is important especially if it will be critiqued by someone who may not be familiar with your brand). It's important to keep your points straight and simple for us to understand. There must be a journey in the campaign from the problem or opportunity down to the evaluation of the campaign. It's what gives your campaign life and longevity, if all the processes are connected. More importantly, winning work needs to be something you believe in. If you don't have confidence in the work, it'll reflect in your entry through the effort you put in, in justifying why your entry should win.

■ ***Prisa also introduced the Student Campaign of the Year in 2016. Why do you think it's important that PR students are included in such initiatives?***

It's important for PR students to get immersed in the work that they will be doing when working in an agency or respective companies. They get to see how much work it takes to execute a successful campaign, let alone plan one from conception. Most institutions don't provide the opportunity for students to work on real-life campaigns as a part of their practical experience, but this is incentive enough to not only understand how PR works, but to also help them network and help them find employment once they're done with school.

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

New perspective. The perspective is different because the generation is also different, as opposed to individuals who have been in PR for more than 10 years. Different generations get to learn from each other. We have to acknowledge that the future of PR is currently sitting in the minds of those who are coming up and are striving towards a different PR than that they knew from ancient textbooks.

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

Working with the cluster judges was quite insightful as a first-time judge. I got to learn that you can't always make everyone

win based on their idea alone. The more we unpacked all the entries, the more I was well aware of the standard that needed to be upheld. It was also very interesting to see what people thought of each entry based on their backgrounds coming in as cluster judges. Overall, I had such an amazing group of judges.

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

The title means that I'm responsible not only for learning about work done in other sectors of PR, but I have the job of using my knowledge through the judging process alongside my team to share this knowledge in defining what award-winning work looks like. Using the very same knowledge in my day-to-day work to better my ways of campaign management, planning and execution, so that I can submit more award-winning work that I can be proud of.

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

PR is an amazing space to be in because it forces you to adapt to changes you were never ready for. I love that it allows for past PR practices to still play a role in the present and future practice of this industry. The more we move into the future, the more collaborative and integrated everything is becoming. The past concept of spray and pray has become outdated because people wanted personalised experiences with the brands and is allowing us to learn from the markets we serve and helps us strengthen our insights for future campaigns to come. PR is also not about sharing messages to favour a company's reputation but it's also about how those messages are driving human behaviour. People are well aware of the impacts that campaigns have in communities, and make it a point to always follow up with the brands to ensure that they're still working and making a difference via the work they're constantly putting out.

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 Nombulelo Fox on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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