

Nomathemba Selesho drives inclusion and resilience in SA's logistics sector

In celebration of Youth Month, we spotlight Nomathemba Selesho, a trailblazing entrepreneur rewriting the rules of South Africa's male-dominated logistics industry. From growing up in a small township to building Themba Liyeza Logistics, Selesho has turned adversity into drive.

 By Robin Fredericks 23 Jun 2025



Nomathemba Liyeza, Owner, Themba Liyeza Logistics

Living with a hearing disability, she's built a business rooted in resilience, inclusion, and community upliftment. Recently honoured with the SAB Foundation Tholoana Award for her outstanding entrepreneurial leadership, Selesho is proving that gender, disability, and background are no barriers to success — and she's only just getting started.

▣ Can you tell us about your journey into the logistics industry — what inspired you to launch Themba Liyeza Logistics, and what kept you motivated through the challenges?

I grew up with a father who was an entrepreneur, who started as a truck driver, and later bought his truck, which is when I developed a love for the transport and logistics sector. I used to help him with doing invoices. He was very involved and very involved in terms of doing his mechanical work on the truck, and I would pass him spanners when he was fixing the truck.

After completing my matric, my dad wanted me to start my own business, but I went and pursued my career journey in accounting because I wanted to be a Chartered Accountant, but then I got a job at one of the big four banks. I worked for three years and resigned in 2018. I registered Themba Liyeza Logistics, bought my first truck and commenced in our first line of business, the transportation of coal.

▣ Winning the SAB Foundation Tholoana Award is a huge achievement. What did that recognition mean to you personally and professionally?

Winning the SAB Foundation Tholoana Award was an incredible blessing and a turning point in my journey. It was the first award I received since starting my business, and it brought both personal and professional validation. As someone who has quietly struggled with impostor syndrome, this recognition reminded me

that I truly belong in this space — that my work, my vision, and my impact matter.

Professionally, it opened many doors. Shortly after, I was nominated as a Rising Star at the 2023 Transpo Evolution Awards, and in March 2025, I received the Presidential Honorary Award for Youth in Business. These milestones have built momentum and belief, not just in me, but in what Themba Liyeza Solutions stands for.

We are now focused on expanding into the food and beverage logistics and fuel transportation sectors, while also launching mentorship services for those who want to enter the transport industry. I hope this journey inspires others — especially women and people with disabilities — to pursue their goals boldly, even when it feels intimidating.

‣ ***Logistics is a tough, male-dominated space. As a woman, youth, and entrepreneur living with disability, what unique challenges have you faced — and how have you overcome them?***

I have always believed that the sky is not the limit. I refuse to fail, and I always make sure that I go after what I want. Yes, the logistics industry is male-dominated, but women are *Imbokodo*, meaning there is nothing that we cannot achieve. Being in this industry has taught me how to work with different people from different backgrounds and cultures. You learn nothing when you are in your comfort zone. I also believe in hard work and always advancing yourself.

I experienced a lot of challenges, mostly being imposter syndrome and low self-esteem due to being ashamed to be wearing hearing aids as it made me feel like people undermine you for not being able to hear them, unless they are very close to you and talk loudly, leading to being scared to talk about my business and approach clients.

I decided to own it, as it's my story and makes me different. I even recently got a mute sign tattoo behind my right ear that is completely deaf to help me with coping and not being embarrassed about it.

‣ ***How has your involvement in the Tholoana Enterprise Programme influenced the growth and direction of your business? What are some of the most valuable lessons you've learned?***

Being part of the Tholoana Enterprise Programme has been a transformative experience — it didn't just grow my business, it grew me as a leader. The structure, mentorship, and support I received helped refine our business strategy and gave us the confidence to scale sustainably.

Before the programme, Themba Liyeza Solutions had a vision but lacked systems. Through Tholoana, we learned how to improve financial management, governance, and performance tracking, which led to increased profitability and more secure contracts. The support helped us expand into new areas like staff transport, now food & beverage delivery, and mentorship services.

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is that you can't grow in isolation — mentorship and community matter. I also learned to embrace my unique identity as a woman entrepreneur living with a disability. Tholoana helped me realise that my story isn't a setback — it's my power.

The programme didn't just change our business direction — it helped us position for long-term impact.

‣ ***Youth Month celebrates the resilience and leadership of young South Africans. What advice would you give to other young people — especially women and those with disabilities — who dream of starting a business in logistics or another tough industry?***

To every young person — especially women and those living with disabilities — my advice is simple: start where you are, with what you have, and believe that you are enough. The logistics industry is tough, male-dominated, and not always welcoming — but there is space for you, and we need your voice, your brilliance and your innovation.

Don't wait for perfect conditions. When I started, I had more doubt than resources, but I pushed through fear and kept showing up. Resilience isn't just about strength — it's about consistency, purpose, and knowing that your journey is valid even when it's different.

Surround yourself with people who believe in you, invest in learning the business side of things, and never let your disability or circumstances define your potential. Your lived experience gives you a unique edge. Use it.

You don't have to fit the mold — you can break it and build something extraordinary. Keep going.

■ ***Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of South Africa's logistics and freight industry, and where do you see your business heading in the next five years?***

What excites me most about South Africa's logistics and freight industry is the shift towards innovation, inclusion, and sustainability. We're seeing growing opportunities for black-owned businesses, youth-led enterprises, and women in a space that was once inaccessible to many of us.

Technology is transforming the way we transport goods, monitor fleets, and optimise delivery, and that presents a huge opportunity to make logistics smarter and more efficient. I'm especially excited about how green mobility, alternative fuels, and AI integration will shape the next generation of freight.

Over the next five years, Themba Liyeza Solutions aims to become a nationally recognised logistics company. We're expanding into fuel transportation, food and beverage logistics, and building a training and mentorship division to empower more young people and entrepreneurs to thrive in the transport space.

We also want to lead with impact — not just profit — by creating jobs in underserved areas and proving that inclusion and excellence can go hand in hand in the logistics industry.

■ ***Outside of your work in logistics, what passions or interests keep you balanced and inspired?***

Outside of logistics, I find balance and inspiration through reading entrepreneurial books, mentoring young entrepreneurs, and spending time in nature. I'm deeply passionate about youth empowerment, especially helping young women and people living with disabilities see their value beyond societal limits.

I also enjoy creative outlets like journaling, quiet time with my family, and lately, learning more about wellness and clean living, which ties beautifully into my new venture, Hydrate Aqua. It reminds me that entrepreneurship isn't just about business — it's about creating a life that's meaningful and aligned with who you are.

■ ***If you could go back and give your younger self one piece of career or life advice at the start of this journey, what would it be?***

If I could go back, I would tell my younger self: "You are not behind — you are right on time. Trust your journey, and don't let fear or comparison shrink your potential."

I would remind her that failure isn't the opposite of success — it's part of the path. Every setback, every

challenge, is building something in you that success will later need.

Most importantly, I would tell her: “Your hearing impairment doesn’t make you less — it makes you differer abled. It gives you the ability to tune out the noise and hear only what truly matters. That’s your gift.”

I would encourage her to speak up, even when her voice shakes. To dream louder. To ask for help. And to know that being a woman, being young, and living with a disability are not barriers — they are strengths in disguise.

Note: Themba Liyeza Logistics operates as a division of Themba Liyeza Solutions.

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