

## AYANDA MHLONGO

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### PROFILE SUMMARY

Inclusive Development Strategist, educator, and award-winning leader with over nine years' experience advancing social justice, systems transformation, and ethical governance across South Africa, the UK, and globally. I have a proven record of strengthening student success, embedding equity into institutional culture, and ensuring transparent, accountable leadership.

As a proud UCT alumna and former lecturer, I am committed to ensuring that Convocation remains an active, representative, and values-aligned voice shaping UCT's future direction - while promoting excellence, belonging, and transformation for both students and alumni.

### MOTIVATION TO SERVE CONVOCATION

I am standing for the Convocation Executive Committee to strengthen accountability, champion an inclusive alumni voice, and ensure that UCT remains a globally competitive institution that honours its history while shaping a just and innovative future. I am committed to ethical stewardship, transparent leadership, and advancing student and alumni success across all communities connected to UCT.

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### KEY AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Gender Policy and Advocacy
  - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategy
  - Trauma-Informed and Survivor-Centred Programming
  - Governance and Ethical Leadership
  - Stakeholder and Intersectoral Collaboration
  - Research, Monitoring & Evaluation
  - Social Development and Inclusive Systems Design
  - Intergenerational and Intersectional Analysis
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### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Advisor**

*GIZ – South Africa, Lesotho, and eSwatini | 2025 – Present*

- Lead implementation of regional DEI strategy embedding gender equity, inclusion, and accountability in policy and operations.
- Design DEI toolkits and frameworks used to guide institutional culture, recruitment, and leadership accountability.

- Facilitate trauma-informed dialogues and training on gender justice, bias, and inclusion for over 200+ staff.
- Strengthened organizational systems for gender mainstreaming and monitoring progress toward equitable development outcomes.

### **DEI & Gender Policy Consultant**

*Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) | 2022 – 2025*

- Conducted comprehensive diversity assessments and led the development of a DEI strategy amplifying marginalized voices in policy spaces.
- Initiated and co-led the **“Women’s Voices: Practice and Policy Hearings Symposium”**, connecting grassroots practitioners and policymakers across Southern Africa and Europe.
- Enhanced ACTSA’s engagement in cross-border advocacy for gender equality, aligning with feminist foreign policy principles.

### **Inclusive Development Strategist & Facilitator (Independent Consultant)**

*Clients: Mastercard Foundation, Development Action Group, UN Youth Assembly, Anglia Ruskin University | 2019 – 2025*

- Designed and facilitated national dialogues, leadership programmes, and policy workshops on gender justice, trauma, and inclusion.
- Secured **R5.4 million in funding** to support marginalized students and youth-led development initiatives.
- Represented South Africa at the **United Nations Youth Assembly**, advocating for inclusive, gender-responsive development.

### **Lecturer and Programme Lead**

*University of Cape Town | 2019 – 2023*

- Developed trauma-informed pedagogy frameworks for equitable access in higher education.
- Led a mentorship initiative improving programme reach by 50% within one year.
- Created a Teaching Assistant programme supporting over 3,000 students from underrepresented backgrounds
- Delivered academic leadership and supervised diverse student cohorts, promoting inclusive learning excellence

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## **ACADEMIC BACKGROUND**

### **PhD Candidate, Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies**

*University of Cambridge | Forthcoming Completion*

*Focus: Historical & Intergenerational Trauma in South Africa – Black Female Freedom Fighters and Their Children*

### **MPhil, Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies**

University of Cambridge | 2021

*Focus: Refugee Women, Dignity, and Access to Care in Community Systems*

### **MSocSci, Social Development (Distinction)**

University of Cape Town | 2020

*Focus: Homeless Women, Period Poverty, Social Policy, and Women's Capabilities*

### **BSocSci Honours, Social Development**

University of Cape Town | 2017

*Focus: Youth Development, Inclusive Growth, Poverty, and Social Exclusion*

### **BSocSci, Organisational Psychology, Social Development & Gender Studies (Distinction)**

University of Cape Town | 2016

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### **BOARD, ADVISORY & LEADERSHIP ROLES**

- Founder and Member, *GIZ Regional DEI Task Team (Southern Africa)*
  - Leader, *Women's Voices: Practice & Policy Hearings Symposium*
  - Former Teaching Fellow, *Anglia Ruskin University (Courses: Feminist Debates & Activism; Race, Racism & Cultural Identity)*
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### **HONOURS & RECOGNITION**

- **Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South Africans** – Education Category
  - **News24 Young Mandela of the Future** – Mental Health & Social Change Category
  - **Lincoln Mali Leadership Fellow**
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### **SELECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER & GBVF WORK**

- Designed **Menstrual Health Toolkit** for schools in Tanzania addressing systemic barriers to girls' education.
- Conducted **policy briefings** on gender and trauma-informed practice for youth organisations and multilateral partners.
- Published and presented on **gendered trauma, freedom narratives, and intersectionality** in post-conflict contexts.
- Developed and delivered **creative methodology workshops** positioning storytelling and art as tools for healing and policy influence.