

## **Engen's Wendy Ntombela remembers her women of real worth**

South Africa celebrates National Women's Day annually on 9 August. It commemorates the 1956 march of approximately 20 000 women to the [Union Buildings](#) in [Pretoria](#), and as a result, it remains the day which represents liberation, strength and equality to millions of contemporary South African women.

Wendy Ntombela, a Senior Planning and Economics Engineer at the Engen Refinery in Durban, understands better than most the impact that women of worth have on our world. Wendy's world would look very different today, had it not been for the love, encouragement, inspiration and support she received from the significant women in her life.

"For me, Woman's Day reminds me that change begins with me: it means standing up for what is just and what you believe in, no matter the odds. Just like the women who marched 60 odd years ago," says Wendy.

Born in Lamontville, Wendy Ntombela grew up in Wentworth, and later moved back to her place of birth, which is a township south of Durban. She was schooled at Collingwood Primary and Umbilo Secondary in Wentworth. Walking away from an abusive man, the roles of family provider, guide, protector and parent fell upon Wendy's mother, Nair Nsibande.

"My mother is amazing. On a local dress maker's pay, she had to hustle day in and day out – in a two room block with a leaking roof and no running water - my mother supported my older cousin, my two younger sisters and I through school and my first year of varsity," Wendy recalls.

Wendy describes herself as an analytical introvert and attributes her mother's love for maths and science as a real encouragement to her.

"Funny enough in grades two and three, I distinctly remember when other children wanted to be teachers, police and doctors, I wanted to become a Mathematician, then a Scientist."

It was while at high school that Wendy started attending the Engen's Maths and Science School at Fairvale Secondary where she was fortunate to "interact with a wider range of exceptional teachers and gain a broader exposure to a wider knowledge base of each subject."

After school, she went on to study Chemical Engineering at the University of Durban-Westville, which later became UKZN. Wendy received an Engen Bursary in her second year at university and enjoyed the opportunity to work at Engen during her vacations.

Wendy lives by a simple mantra: keep at it, dream bigger and enjoy every moment! But behind her unstoppable optimism lies a deep faith and commitment to her family.

"I have always found that God sends Angelic people who pass through my life at a certain point and inspire me through the various chapters, from family to church, to school, to neighbours and friends," she acknowledges. "But as to inspiration," Wendy continues, "well my constant and unwavering inspiration remains my Queens, my mother and late Grandmother, who- through literally blood, sweat and tears - have strived to carry and support not just me, but our entire family - with broad shoulders, heads held high and smiles always."

It is clear that Wendy's roots are foundational to her views. After all, they moulded her and motivated her to choose Engineering as a career that would impact her world.

"In grade 10 when I visited the Engen Career day, I was sold on engineering. What inspired me is how the profession is able to transform and enhance our daily living, by taking the simplest raw materials and transforming them into value-adding everyday products which undeniably and profoundly uplift our society.

"Just as Elon Musk says: *Engineering is the closest thing to magic that exists in the real world and who wouldn't want to be a magician?*"

On a professional level, Wendy admires Ms. Nona Chili, CEO of Makwande Energy Trading for her character, intellect and drive.

Married to her varsity sweetheart of 12 years ("my God-Engineered Promise, Sithembiso") and blessed with two children (Mfundo and Nontsikelelo), Wendy has every reason to look ahead with confidence.

She plans to broaden her solid refinery experience by gaining experience in the supply chain area of the petrochemical business over the immediate future, before exploring the many other opportunities in the sector further down the line.

And when she does, Wendy will tackle these career challenges with typical confidence. "I don't believe God has brought me this far, to leave me now," she says.

Wendy Ntombela's faith and self-belief will take her far. No matter where she goes or what she achieves, she will – no doubt- remember forever that she stands upon the broad shoulders of women of worth: women whose sacrifice, encouragement and humour carried her through really tough times, into her new world, where she will grow the rich gifts she has received.