

Biography

Slee Mbhele, Mphil (MCH)

Project Manager

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Division of Human Biology,

Ms Mbhele attended McHenry County college, Chicago, USA for her undergraduate studies and University of Cape Town, SA for postgraduate studies.

Ms Mbhele is a project manager for the division of Human Biology, University of Cape Town. She oversees and coordinate the logistical aspects of projects operations (from site, specimen collection to the laboratory processes) as well as provide sound grant (projects) costing, financial administration. As well as new proposals coordination and administration (pre-/post award)".

She is also an entrepreneur, Founder and CEO of a biorepository "medical specimen storage" company (Life On Ice Pty Ltd).

During her spare time, Ms Mbhele

- ◆ A wildfire firefighter volunteer, based at the Newlands forest.
- ◆ Does dragon boating and she hold a vice-chairperson position for the Western Province Dragon Boating Association (WPDBA).



Re-Imagining Cape Town a feminist city as a Wildfire Firefighter Volunteer

- Famous words of Jefferson. “It is self-evident, that all Men are created equal...” Powerful words that have echoed for centuries, but if not practiced or/and reinforced; they are simply, just empty words.
- Growing up the notion that certain jobs are for men, was evident. ie. army, police officer or fire fighter.
- Somehow, it never registered in my mind that gender would be a barrier to achieving my dreams and reaching my goals. It never crossed my mind, if anything despite growing up in a society that didn't celebrate, or welcome diversity which felt like the utmost obstacle.
- Woman have spent decades being told what to do or what not to do... how to behave and what to wear. Decades of conditioning left woman thinking they are inferior and other 'taboos' of the old society.

My first time on the fire line, as nervous as I was, first time with live flames... with full PPE on and my heavy backpack, most incredible and memorable fire ever!! My crew leader needed communication to be passed down to the front about hoses and pumps, he had the confidence to tell whom ever was next to him (ME) without thinking twice whether the person was competent or not... Most incredible feeling was to not feel judged by your gender or the way you look. Gender didn't and it doesn't matter!

Surprise Surprise... Fire has no gender!

- Being a fire fighter leaves me satisfied of JUST being. I can be me without being apologetic. I'm treated equally by my peers.
- We still have a long way to go for sure, but as a wildfire fighter volunteer (male/female)
 - We train the same
 - Drills are the same
 - Requirements for qualifying as a wildfire fighter, driver or planner are the same, regardless of gender
- We have the first ALL woman fire fighter crew in 2020



Conditioned to think inferior to men

- We need a society that will start seeing women and men of our country as people, persons or simply human beings with no discrimination.
 - Start teaching our young girls that they can be and do anything they put their minds to, not to just “think like a man and act like a lady” Steve Harvey
 - Such phrases make our young growing woman and society think there must be something wrong with being a woman, if I must think like a man to fit in, understand or be understood by my society
 - I lived my whole life being told I was acting like a man, just because I took charge when necessary, work hard and have perseverance.
 - I know what I want and damn make sure I work hard to achieve my goals... and just because I can change my own tire, paint or change light bulbs... that doesn't make me less of a woman or more of a man. I'm just a person!
 - We need to teach our young men to treat woman with respect, while treating them like ladies (as they should be)
- **We have come a long way, no doubt. Woman empowerment is essential, but also woman empowering woman!**