

# CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

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# Nonprofit Inkululeko Connects Syracuse University Community and South Africa; Staff Member to Speak on Campus Feb. 28

Monday, February 18, 2019, By Joyce LaLonde

Walking into Luzuko Methodist Preschool, a preschool outside of then-Grahamstown, now called Makhanda, South Africa, in summer 2014, Nicole Osborne '14 was welcomed into a classroom of 2- and 3-year-olds. Where language differences left communication gaps, song and dance filled them. The children danced to the song “Jika” (which means “turn” or “twist” in Zulu) by the South African band “Mi Casa.” The song was a hit in the country at the time and had a viral dance to go with it that the kids knew. The Syracuse University students who joined Osborne on the Syracuse Abroad summer program jumped in and learned the dance alongside the kids. This dance would later bond them with South African college students and even create memories at the dance club. Everyone knew the “Jika.”

The common joys found in music transcend cultural, country and literal barriers. That lesson grounds Osborne as she works to alleviate the common struggles of South Africa and the United States through her work with [Inkululeko](#), a partner organization of the [Syracuse Abroad](#) summer program.



Inkululeko Board Secretary Ronald Taylor '15, G'16 and Board Chair Nicole Osborne '14 in South Africa.

Osborne, currently a research analyst in the Division of Advancement and External Affairs and a graduate student in the School of Information Studies, is planning a hallmark event for Inkululeko, “Syracuse Meet South Africa,” on March 1 in Syracuse. For the first time, an Inkululeko South African staff member will come to the University. Zuko Gqadavama, resource development coordinator, will be at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, 350 W. Fayette St., Syracuse, on Friday, March 1, at 6 p.m. for a meet and greet with the University and CNY community. All are invited to meet Gqadavama and learn more about Inkululeko’s partnerships with Syracuse University.

The event cost is \$5 for students and \$15 for general admission. Thanks to donations from the Office of Community Engagement and Price Chopper, the cost of the ticket will be a direct gift to Inkululeko. Primary needs of the organization are more computers, expanded internet access and other academic tools. “The donations shall not only benefit the learners but parents as well, because a burden of internet café costs shall be lifted upon their shoulders as Inkululeko will be providing such services with the help of your donations,” says Gqadavama. Those interested in attending may [purchase tickets online](#) and [contact Osborne](#) with any questions.

Gqadavama is also making an appearance on campus one day prior as an invited speaker for the Newhouse Center for Global Engagement’s “No Innocence This Side of The Womb” symposium. The event—Thursday, Feb. 28, in the Joyce Hergenhan Auditorium, Newhouse 3—will explore issues of equality, privilege and justice in Syracuse and South Africa. Gqadavama is a participant in the 5 p.m. panel “South Africa to Syracuse - ‘A Common Struggle.’”

Gqadavama’s first Syracuse University appearance will be at the Office of Community Engagement’s Thursday Morning Roundtable (TMR). While there, he will talk about his experience as a member of the “born-free” or after the apartheid ended generation. A weekly civic education program, TMR meets at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse in the fourth floor Community Engagement space from 8 to 9 a.m., with coffee and networking before and after the session. TMR is free and open to the public, with a rebroadcast of the recording on WCNY-FM radio on Sundays at 8:00 p.m.

Thursday Morning Roundtable is a weekly civic education program, which brings in speakers to discuss current topics and issues. TMR meets at the Warehouse in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor Community Engagement space from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m., with coffee and networking before and after the session. TMR is free and open to the public, with a rebroadcast of the recording on WCNY-FM radio on Sundays at 8:00 p.m.

“What excites me about going to SU is the fact that I will be representing the views of an African child to the world, views that are mostly misinterpreted by the world and those who find themselves in better positions of power and wealth,” says Gqadavama. “More than anything, I want the audience to be inspired to continue the conversation even after the symposium. I want the audience to be motivated to take the

bottom up approach in dealing with social issues they faced and understand that the power is theirs regardless of social status and class.”



For the past eight years, *Inkululeko* has worked with Syracuse Abroad, Falk College and departments across campus to advance its mission to “provide South African township youth with the skills, support and guidance necessary to apply, attend and succeed in university; to challenge the bigotry of low expectations for township youth; and to provide

sustainable, positive change; student-by-student, generation-by-generation.”

Osborne was introduced to the power of this mission during that summer nearly five years ago, and its presence in her life has grown. After two years as the Inkululeko Board of Director’s secretary, Osborne is now serving as board chair. And she is far from alone in Syracuse University’s connection to the nonprofit. About 120 students have studied abroad through the Syracuse Abroad summer program, and more than 100 others have supported Inkululeko: serving as interns, volunteering, researching and more. The students leave these experiences with personal and professional growth, as well as an everlasting bond to both the organization and the community it serves.

In fact, Osborne is one of five Syracuse University alumni to serve on Inkululeko’s 12-person board, along with Imranul Haque G’11, G’14; Adam King G’12 and a current student in the College of Law; Ronald Taylor ’15, G’16 (board secretary); and Kristin Toellner G’13 (board treasurer).

“In many ways, Syracuse University has been an integral partner of Inkululeko since the organization started,” Osborne says. “Together, we are challenging the norm for what learning looks like both in the U.S. and in South Africa. As an SU alumna and board chair of Inkululeko, I’m honored to be a part of furthering our mission of global education and skills development.”

In its day-to-day operations, Inkululeko partners with the Rhodes University Office of Community Engagement and Social Development to have tutors from the Rhodes University School of Education work one-on-one with Inkululeko youth. The social enterprise unit of Inkululeko blossomed from a collaborative entrepreneurship course with the Whitman School. The unit launched the Common Grounds Café, which provides a space for young people, run by young people, to have fun playing a board game, participate in a soccer tournament or go online—all opportunities hard to come by in Makhanda before the café.

“We are profoundly grateful to have sustained, robust, mutually beneficial partnerships with Syracuse University for nearly a decade, particularly with Falk College and Syracuse Abroad. From 8,000 miles

away, students and faculty from SU have affirmed the transformative power of education,” says Jason Torreano, executive director of Inkululeko. “Folks in CNY have had a profound impact on moving our organization forward through developing marketing materials, helping with social media, assisting with grant writing and helping design our website.”

One of the most recent collaborations involves the Policy Studies Program in the Maxwell School and the course PAF 410: IT and Business Applications. Under the guidance of Bill Coplin, professor of policy studies and director of the program, and led by Kelsey May '17, the students in the course are challenged to analyze cloud-based applications, execute product implementation strategies and create a data collection tool for Inkululeko. This will ultimately lead to the development of a mobile application to track learner progress and serve as a community engagement tool.

Gqadavama is the Inkululeko staff member leading the charge on the policy studies partnership. Gqadavama was born in rural Lusikisiki, South Africa (Eastern Cape Province of South Africa). He attended high school in Humansdorp; studied at Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth, where he majored in psychology; and received an honors degree from Rhodes University. During his studies at Rhodes, he worked with Syracuse University students. Now, he does it full time and will soon be on the campus he tangentially serves.

Syracuse University’s partnership with Inkululeko dives into both the collective struggle and joy shared between culture, communities and countries. For students interested in learning more, there are many ways to get involved: attend one or both of the events described above; study abroad through the [Syracuse Summer Abroad](#) program “South Africa Immersion: A Global Health Education Experience” (keep in mind, the deadline to apply is Wednesday, Feb. 20, and new merit-based scholarships are available); and contact [Osborne](#) or [Torreano](#) for information on the many opportunities for collaboration.

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