

How did your own education influence your involvement in education currently?

I went to a great school in East London. It wasn't a perfect school but the teachers were really central to my development especially when I was in high school. The experience made me realise the importance of teachers as well as schools that build and develop their students. I think education is central to solving the many challenges we face and the classroom allows me to talk to my students about the world beyond the classroom in a way other professions don't allow for interaction with young people.



Athambile Masola

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Read more of her work here:
<http://bit.ly/1JWTEen>; <http://bit.ly/1M90625>
<http://bit.ly/1IDGnRa>

What are some of the greatest challenges, in your opinion, that South Africa is facing?

Inequality, and a lack of reckoning with what that means for daily lived experiences. The gap between the rich and the poor affects every aspect of our lives: education, health, politics and crime. And if the gap keeps widening we will see more disillusionment. As a normal person in the street I've also wondered about my role in getting involved in a meaningful way in order to subvert the status quo and I think that's another challenge: most people don't seem to think we can change things as they are right now. This perception affects everything we do: how we interact with the state, whether we want to be knowledgeable about institutions that are doing important work and whether we will choose to get involved in organisations doing work to change the current state of affairs.

What one way could you, or would you, contribute to a better future for South Africa?

Part of the reason I started working within education was because of the belief that education is one of the tools needed to change the world for better. I know I could do more in the education sector. I would like to do more work recruiting young people into the teaching profession in order to deal with the teacher shortage in South Africa. I would like to do more work challenging young people to think critically about the world around them and question their reality more in order to consider solutions for the future in different ways. Some of the work I do as a teacher allows me to do this, but there's always more to be done.

What advice do you have for other aspiring women leaders?

Often when women get into leadership positions they take on a masculine approach to leadership. I think women leaders need to be wary of this and ensure that their femininity (whatever that might look like for each woman) is not lost while climbing the ladder of leadership. I also think women in leadership positions need to make the circle bigger for other women the same way men use their networks to open up spaces for each other (the proverbial old boys club).