

From KFC employee to NWU graduate

Klerksdorp Record, Potchefstroom - After finishing matric in 2014 and having no prospects for the future, Noxolo Bulungwa from Klerksdorp found herself depressed for over two years.

"I had no hope for the future. There was a lack of funds and I had no idea what I wanted to study, so I decided to take a gap year after matric," she explained.

That gap year lasted for four years. "I was constantly overwhelmed by people telling me what I should study. The way I was feeling, the last thing I wanted to do was choose something I wasn't interested in and end up wasting money," she said.

Being the firstborn of four, Noxolo always felt the need to set an example for her sisters and succeed. Although it wasn't the exact plan she had imagined for her life, she decided to make lemonade from lemons and started working at KFC in 2016. "It was tough," she said. "Sometimes, I would have to work the night shift and clock in the next morning."

However, Noxolo says she wouldn't be where she is today were it not for that experience. "The job taught me discipline and how to work with different

people."

In 2018, there was finally light at the end of the tunnel when someone randomly approached Noxolo at church. They encouraged her to further her studies and assured her that it was the right time and everything would be taken care of.

"I wasn't sure what they meant, but I applied anyway, with no plan on how the studies would be paid for," she said. "To my surprise, a good samaritan offered my mom funds for my registration and the same thing happened later, with a deposit for my accommodation," she said.

Starting with a clean slate, Noxolo never let anything get in her way. "Had I not worked long hours for a year at KFC, I wouldn't have had the discipline, desire and interest to study further," she said.

Noxolo remembers how a former colleague told her she would struggle to study when she left work. A former friend also said the course she had chosen was useless, but she never allowed such comments to deter her. "The most challenging time of my studies was losing my mother to Covid last year. It was extremely tough; my mom was my support; she was my everything," she lamented.

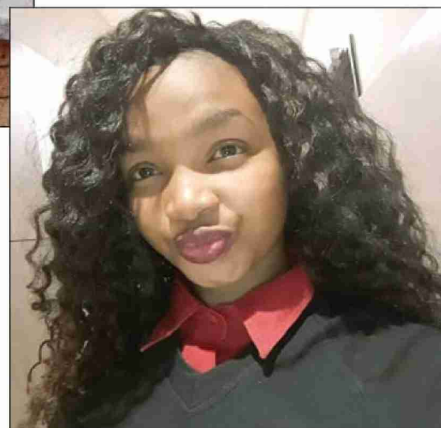
Despite the tragedy, Noxolo showed resilience and graduated with an Honours in Labour Relations, a total of 16 distinctions and a golden key membership to her name for being a top 15% achiever in her faculty.

"Even though my mom didn't get to see me graduate, I'm so thankful for the foundation she laid for me," she said. "I drew a lot of inspiration from wanting to create a better life for my siblings and being able to take care of them and my dad," she added.

Noxolo's advice to everyone is that, no matter what you go through in life, trust in God's timing.



Noxolo graduated with an Honours in Labour Relations from the NWU in Potchefstroom.



Noxolo as a KFC employee.