

S1. Ep.3: Women are changing the way we're changing the world: Journey to influence

[00:00:00] **Kentse:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the, 'Just for a Change' podcast powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. First of all, what you need to know about us is that thinking differently and innovatively about solving big social issues is what makes us tick. We love offering new perspectives on social innovation and social justice.

[00:00:25] So we hope you'll be inspired to make a difference wherever you are. We're changing the way we're changing the world.

[00:00:35] **Linda:** [00:00:35] Welcome to the, 'Just for a Change' podcast with me, Linda Daniels, sitting in Kentse's seat as your guest host for today's episode. Coming to you from Stellenbosch. I am a Bertha scholar and I'm reading towards an MSc in inclusive innovation. I've been a journalist for most of my working life, and I've been employed at different times in community and commercial media.

[00:01:00] [00:01:00] My chosen career of journalism was fueled by my own need to productively contribute to society. If you were to ask people of different generations, what influence meant. Or who would they dub as influential people over the years?

You'd certainly get some varying responses. It would range from, let's say Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the 24th president of Liberia and the first elected female head of state in Africa to Caster Semenya South African track star and Olympic gold medalist from Wangari Muta Maathai who was a renowned Kenyan, social, environmental, and political activist, and the first African woman to win the Nobel prize to South African singer songwriter and civil rights activist, Maria Makeba from Mozambican politician and humanitarian Graça Machel to your own mother, grandmother, aunt, or teacher to name a few.

[00:01:57] You see influence is [00:02:00] something you gain over time. Let's look at Miriam Makeba for example. She was forced to start working as a child after the death of her father. But that wasn't the only hardship she endured. She also survived breast cancer and was forced into exile in the U S in 1960, by the apartheid regime, weary of her vocal opposition.

[00:02:24] I bet neither she, nor her community expected her to gain such influence that she would be nicknamed Mama Africa. Her singer songwriter career later expanded to her starring in an international anti-apartheid film. And she also went on to become a United Nations goodwill ambassador, as well as a civil rights activist.

[00:02:46] Talk about a woman of influence. So how does one become influential? Well with this matriarch's life as our springboard, today, we'll look at the topic of journey to influence. As we hear [00:03:00] from some more inspiring women, we'll get a glimpse into how women are changing the way

we're changing the world. We decided to ask some ladies from the UCT Graduate School of Business about influence. Here's, what they had to say.

[00:03:23] **voice pops:** [00:03:23] To be a woman of influence to me is being consistent in using every opportunity and platform to advocate for women empowerment and also pave the way for the next generation.

So for me being a woman of influence means building spaces in which other women are [00:03:41] not required to be strong, [00:03:43] to prove that they deserve to fully exist.

[00:03:47] It also means using my power in spaces where I am a woman of influence to empower other women.

We have to stand up for ourselves and those who are vulnerable, [00:04:00] we have to stand up against anti-black and misogyny. That we must be fearless in expressing our discomfort and challenging the status quo.

[00:04:11] **Linda:** [00:04:11] Today, we chat to an incredible woman with inspiring stories on the topic of journey to influence.

Welcome Dr [00:04:19] Tracey Naledi, a medical doctor, public health physician, and one of the deputy deans in the Faculty of Health Sciences at UCT. Tracey is a 2018-19 Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation and Discovery Health Foundation, PhD candidate. Tracey is also the foundation chairperson for Tekano Atlantic Fellows for health equity. Her work has focused on policy development, health system strengthening, addressing health inequity, and strengthening systems for health.

[00:04:53] Welcome Dr Naledi. Good morning. Thank you for joining me. What does it mean to be influential?

[00:05:00] [00:05:00] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:05:00] Hi, Linda. Um, thank you so much for having me on the podcast. Um, so I guess influential means that you have the ability to convince people. You have the ability to get people, to see, um, a big picture, to see a vision and to want to be part of that vision.

[00:05:33] Um, if you're a leader, I guess it means then getting others to follow you and buy into that vision, that big picture, um, and want to be part of it. And want to work with you or to do their bit, to make sure that, uh, that vision is realized.

Linda: [00:05:52] Would you say that being influential is part of being influential?

Tracey: [00:05:58] I think [00:06:00] so. Um, because influential, I guess for me means that you are able to inspire people you are able to. I think it goes back to what I said earlier around making to paint a picture of a particular vision or paint a picture of a new state of being, a picture of something that you would like to see and you can paint it so well that other people can also see it and, um, can actually be inspired by it and want to be part of it.

[00:06:37] So, yes, I guess so.

[00:06:40] **Linda:** [00:06:40] And who have been some of the most influential women in your journey?

[00:06:42] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:06:42] I think the first one I would say is my mother. Uh, my mother grew up in the rural areas in the middle of apartheid. And, um, [00:07:00] grew up with her extended family. Her own mother was a domestic worker. And, uh, who was a

[00:07:08] live-in domestic worker. So you, and then in those times, my mom was born in 1947, as you can imagine what life was like then. Her mother, literally came home to the rural areas to give birth to her and leaved her there with her extended family. And then had to go back to work, when my mom was still very small, so she was raised by my extended family.

[00:07:36] And as you can imagine, Not just her brothers and sisters, but her cousins, et cetera. Um, and her grandpa, her grandfather and grandmother that raised her, um, were, uh, church people. So they, our home was always full of people, the extended family and other community members that came to the [00:08:00] family for whatever reason.

[00:08:01] So she never really was seen as an individual. She was always part of many and being one of the elders was always from a very young age, age, looking after people. But she was kind of, because she has a bright woman, she was, um, encouraged at school to, to reach for her dreams and ended up, um, being quite educated.

[00:08:25] And, um, and that was purely because of her intelligence. So she used her brains and her God given talent to reach great heights. And my mother, she, she studied all the way up until she retired and, um, has always instilled in me that, um, that desire to be better, that desire to. Uh, improve myself, improve my life and improve the lives of my family and my community, [00:08:55] those that are around me. Even though she's retired, she's still working in her community.

She's [00:09:00] still doing it. She's still improving herself. And I call it the great hustler because my mother never, ever does one thing. She was always doing a myriad of things that, um, at the same time. So she is definitely my number one inspiration.

[00:09:15] She's definitely a woman of worth and a very strong black African woman, um, who has done great things.

[00:09:23] **Linda:** [00:09:23] Can you describe what it is like being a woman of influence in your specific sector or industry?

[00:09:29] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:09:29] Um, you know to be quite honest I don't really see myself like that. I just see myself as a woman who is living her life and doing the best that I can do.

[00:09:44] So. It's not like I set out to say, I want to be an influencer or I want to be influential. I'm just living my life and doing the best that I can. Um, so I don't really [00:10:00] see myself in that way. Um, all I can say is that, um, I am inspired by people who really are able to, to live their lives in a way that is fulfilling to themselves and to others and can truly change their communities and can leave a legacy that is meaningful.

[00:10:27] Um, so I'm inspired by that. And I live my life in a way that I try and do things that will improve other people's lives. And, um, will, will, will leave them kind of legacy that, you know, my footprints on this earth are here, you know, one day when I'm no longer here, I want people to remember that I was here, that I impacted on their lives and I did one or two things that improved, um, people's lives.

[00:10:57] Um, I guess it's a, it's a daily [00:11:00] grind. Um, it's something that you never quite achieve because the problems of the world are so enormous and there's so much to be done. So I guess for me, it's a daily way of being, it's a daily kind of mantra for me to say, what is it that, that I'm going to do today that is going to, to make a difference in my life, in my family's life, in my community's life?

[00:11:31] So I think it's a, it's a daily, daily kind of agenda for me about what it is, how I am living my life.

[00:11:40] **Linda:** [00:11:40] Tell me doctor about your own journey to influence. How have you been able to use your influence to shib perspecDves and nudge at systemic injusDces towards women in your industry?

[00:11:53] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:11:53] So I am a medical doctor, um, and [00:12:00] I am the first within my family, my extended family to be a doctor.

[00:12:07] Um, and I think it's a so important for people. That you look up to, to look like you. And I say this because, um, The reason that I'm a doctor today is because I met somebody who looked like me, who made me believe that it was possible to be a doctor. Um, he wasn't a woman, he was a man, but he was the first black man to come into my township, into Mduduza.

[00:12:39] When I was a young girl. I think I must have been six or eight. I was very young. And, um, he came into our township and opened up a pracDce in our township. Before then we used to go into town, into Nigel town to see a doctor. I'd been to see that doctor many Dmes. [00:13:00] Um, and it never once occurred to me [00:13:04] that I could be a doctor. And, uh, when I met doctors, you'll be who was a doctor for the first Dme. I actually it'll come to me that. I can actually be a doctor. Um, and I carried that dream with me from when I was very young. I admit, I think my parents played a big part in that of indoctrinaDng me every Dme we had a guest or somebody come visit our family, they would say, Oh, tell aunDe so[00:13:32] and so, um, or so and so, and , so and so, Um, what do you want to be when you grow up? And I would say, Oh, I want to be a doctor and everybody would clap. You know, it's like, Oh, well done. You know, and all my life I had to repeat that story over and over and over and over and over again that it became kind of part of my dream.

[00:13:52] So to be quite honest, I don't know, whether It was truly my dream or whether it was an indoctrinaDon by my [00:14:00] family. Be that as it may, I think it's important for, for people who look like you to, um, to actually be in the public space for others to see so that they can see themselves being that and, and being even more of that.

[00:14:21] Um, that's the, that's the first thing to see. And then the other, I think it's about all of these things don't kind of land on your lap. You've got to do the work. Um, so I have, uh, my brother teases me about the number of years that I've studied. Um, you know, he says to me, I've studied for close on 30 years, you know, because I, I went to school up unDI matric.

[00:14:47] Then I went to varsity and then after that, I specialized and now I'm actually doing my PhD as well. So, um, you know, and I think part of being an influencer [00:15:00] also is about knowing your stuff, you know? Um, so you need to prepare yourselves with the skills and the competencies that you need to have to, to be able to do your work.

[00:15:12] I'm one who believes that my work needs to speak for itself. I don't want to be the one blowing my own trumpet about how great I am. Um, I want my work to be the one that does the talking. So it's about you preparing yourself being competent to be able to do your work. And your competence is more than just your technical competence and whether or not, you know the work, whatever it's about, whether you can actually not only understand the work but actually do the work and also is about how you relate to others, which I think as women is one of the things that I think we do better than men.

[00:15:48] In that in the way we lead, the way we carry ourselves, we carried that, um, that feminism within us in the way men we are made to believe that that is not the right way to be that for you to be a great leader, you have to be almost be like a man. And be hard and, you know, and you know, and I don't believe that that is the correct, not the only way to lead. Let me put it that way. And I believe there's women leader leaders who are a lot more gentle, a lot more collaborative opening spaces for others and not being the one that leads from the front all the time, understanding that there is a time to lead from the front, but there's also a time to lead from the side and to also lead from the back as well.

Um, that all of that is also OK. Um, it's also OK, um, to, to be a good listener and not be the first one to jump in and want to have all the answers, that there are answers in all of, in all of us. So I think those are some of the, some of the things that I would say, if you want to be an influencer that you, you need to prepare yourself.

[00:17:01] Then I think the other thing that I might add is that I surround myself with people that I admire and people that are better than me. With people that have achieved great things because they push me to always be better, to always be the best I can be. And I look up to a lot of my people who are my friends, a lot of them, I actually, I tease some of them and say, I'm their number one fan.

[00:17:28] You know, I'm their group. You know, some of, some of the people that I call my friends, are actually people that I admired a lot and, and became friends with. Um, because, because I admired them. And I think it's important to surround yourself with people who inspire you also and push you to be the best that you can be and not make you complacent.

[00:17:51] It's very easy to feel like, or now you've reached your destination. And my view is that you'll never reach [00:18:00] your destination until the day you die.

[00:18:02] **Linda:** [00:18:02] So you've touched on a bit of your personal journey. What has your personal journey been like? What would you say has been the personal cost to be influential and what burdens of influence should young women who want to be influential, be aware of.

[00:18:20] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:18:20] Yeah. Um, I think, um, as a woman, um, you know, my, my daughter, one of my, I have, I have two girls, a young woman, one is 12 and one is 16. And, um, one, somebody once asked me because I've always been a working woman and a mother and somebody

once asked me, Tracey, how do you, how do you do it all? And I said jokingly, Oh, I outsource and my daughter always reminds me of that comment that I made about outsourcing. And I think it's important because you can't do this on your own. [00:19:00] You have to have people who help you. And when I think about where I was raised, I was raised as in an extended family. Um, my brother is 10 years younger than me,

but I don't ever remember being an only child because I was raised around my aunts and uncles and my cousins.

[00:19:18] So I've always been around, um, uh, kind of, um, uh, lots of people around me. So I've never, really felt alone, you know? So it's that, it's that noDon that you don't, I have to do it alone. And I think as women, we someDmes believe that we have to do it all. That's one thing I'm so glad I learned, I learned at a very young age, [00:19:45] age of being a parent. And I think that I need to credit my mother-in-law with that, you know, she taught me that it's okay for me to kind of say, um, I, I really need to take a break. Can you please look aber my daughter for me? [00:20:00] So from a very, I was very lucky that as a young mum, Um, I lived close to my in-laws, who, um, my mother-in-law and my father- in-law are really awesome.

Um, they really supported me as a professional. And I remember when my daughter was about six months old, I had to go to the U S for work. My mother-in-law never made me feel guilty. In fact she made me feel very comfortable about doing that and said, go ahead. I'm right here. I'll look aber the baby go on, do what you have to do.

[00:20:30] She herself by the way is an incredible woman that inspires me a lot. But I think the first thing is that you don't have to do it alone. And I think the cost of your career progressions could be your family. But I think if you surround yourself with family and at where I am right now, and the reason why I had made the comment earlier about outsourcing is because I now live in Cape Town and I don't have family around me, um, at all.

So any [00:21:00] help that I get, I literally have to buy it. And so I decided a long Dme ago that I will sacrifice shoes and whatever else, handbags. And I will put my money on support for me to be, to have a career.

[00:21:17] So I had an au pair so that somebody could be able to fetch my children and take them to their extra mural acDviDes that I couldn't do because I had a full Dme job, um, senior leadership job where I can't really say, Oh, by the way, I need an hour away to go fetch my child and take it wherever it is [00:21:37] she needs to go and take them home and such, I mean, with the traffic and that's a two hour journey that one, if you are taking a child for an extra mural acDvity and you can't, you can't be a leader at the level that work that I was doing to be able to do that. So I was very comfortable in an unashamedly [00:21:56] brought in help if I needed to.

Um, [00:22:00] and I think that the other cost could be yourself really losing yourself. Because, um, you know, it takes a toll on you to be a leader and to do all of this work. Um, and I think the, the kind of work that I do in parDcular around, um, so being at, uh, iniDally working for the department of health, really about service and also my work within the jusDce space, social jusDce space being around, um, Working for others and doing things for others.

[00:22:33] The biggest cost you can have is, is yourself where you sacrifice yourself for others and you don't have Dme for yourself and you don't kind of invest in self-care. And for me, that's a parDcular lesson I learned. You know, actually when I was 40, um, I decided that I am, I am, we're really going to make Dme for myself.

[00:22:55] So once a month I make Dme for myself where I spent [00:23:00] two hours doing things, something that it's just for me, that I liked that I, and I made sure that I. I never ever kind of cancel that appointment on myself. It's an appointment with me, for me. Um, and I made the decision when I was 40, that once a month I will do that.

[00:23:18] Um, and I, I made sure that I spend Dme to develop myself. I listened to a lot of kind of self-development, podcasts and things. I always try and grow myself and make sure that I don't leave myself behind. And that in my growth, my growth is in all facets of my life and my spiritual life and not just, you know, my technical world and my competence and things like that.

[00:23:44] I just try and just be on this agenda of not only doing eh, Stuff for others, but to make sure that I keep myself strong and healthy and, and I think I can definitely do better at that. That is [00:24:00] definitely a journey anyway, and I'm definitely not there yet, but it's something that I'm very aware of that for me to be able to do the things that I do, I need to look after myself [00:24:12] first, and I think it is something that we're not very good at as people. And I think as women in particular, that we're not good at that. Then there's no point in you sacrificing yourself for others. And somehow there seems to be honour in that. That if you sacrifice yourself, it's a good thing. And I think, you know, self-care is, is political and I think it's in part of what I think we deserve.

[00:24:38] It's a, it's a right. Actually, it's not the nice to have. And I think we struggle to allow ourselves, um, Oh, to allow ourselves at that. Um, and I think, yeah, so I think for me, the cost could be your family, but I don't think they have to be at the cost, could be you and, and your health. [00:25:00] Um, and yeah, I think those are the kind of two, two main ones that I'd like to highlight.

[00:25:05] **Linda:** [00:25:05] So if I'm hearing you, Tracey, it's a bit like. You know, pouring from an empty cup and ensuring that your cup is full before you are able to do what you need to do when it comes to family commitments and career commitments.

[00:25:21] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:25:21] Absolutely. Absolutely.

[00:25:23] **Linda:** [00:25:23] Um, if we could just move on to [00:25:27] [00:25:27] the role of innovaDon. [00:25:30] [00:25:30] How's that played [00:25:32] a significant role in your [00:25:33] [00:25:33] career and with that, [00:25:36] [00:25:36] what do you think women in leadership [00:25:38] [00:25:38] can do to increase their positive influence [00:25:41] [00:25:41] in the health sector?

[00:25:44] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:25:44] Well, I was very blessed to be introduced to this thing called an Enneagram. Which is kind of a, I suppose, a personality profile. And my, my Enneagram is, is a seven.

[00:25:59] And so [00:26:00] as part of my personality, I tend to be an innovative person, you know? So, um, and when I reflect on my career, for example, a lot of the things that I've done have been firsts. And a lot of the

things that I've done has been innovaDon. SDII. You think that as far as that is concerned, it's, uh, it's part of my DNA.

[00:26:28] So I am inclined that way sDII. It is not very difficult for me. And in fact that I, I think that's probably what I'm best at. And, um, I have work a lot harder to be able to do the

other parts of my work, which are around making sure that things are implemented and maintained. That is a lot harder for me than to innovate.

[00:26:54] Um, so, and, uh, Yeah. So in terms of my career, I have done a lot of [00:27:00] innovaDon and personally, I find that exciDng. And as I said, I, I kind of my agenda the way I live my life is around improving people's lives. And if you are going to improve people's lives, I believe that innovaDon plays a big part, um, in that, um, and you know, the, the one thing though about innovaDng or doing something new is that, um, you need to be vulnerable.

[00:27:31] One of my, um, favorite authors is Brene Brown. And she talks about vulnerability and she talks about the importance of vulnerability in innovaDon. Because if you are going to innovate, you need to put yourself out there and put yourself out there and put the idea forward. And I mean, for any one idea that is successful, there's probably, I don't know, 20-30 others [00:28:00] that are kind of like shot down, you know?

[00:28:02] And I also surround myself with people that are different to me that can be able to say to me, okay, now you're crazy. You got to come down. That is just like bit too wild, you know, because I can get a bit wild in the way. In my kind of ideas. Um, so, uh, I think, um, yeah, it's important that you also, even in the workspace have other people around you that are different to you, you know, if you innovate too much and not implement anything or make sure that it's implemented properly and actually has the impact that it requires, you know, um, It, you know, there's no point.

[00:28:42] So I do believe that innovaDon is one thing, but you need other bits as well. InnovaDon is important, but you need people who can also make sure that it's implemented meDculously, people who can make sure that it's monitored, is evaluated. You know? So there's different bits. [00:29:00] Of you that you require even within an innovaDon to make sure that it actually lands and is implemented and also others who have different skills and different abiliDes with you to make, to, to help you to help you along.

[00:29:15] But absolutely, I think innovaDon is, is important and someDmes innovaDon is not necessarily your idea. It's something that is a collecDve idea. So you talking to people. And things emerge and collecDvely you come up with a brilliant idea, you know, so I definitely think it's important, but definitely not the only, important thing in the trajectory of ideas.

[00:29:42] And, and also making sure that parDcularly those ideas are more than just ideas.

They, they are impaciu and they do make the change that you want them to make.

[00:29:52] **Linda:** [00:29:52] I'm interested about the idea of vulnerability. And I'm wondering if vulnerability is [00:30:00] part of influence and being influenDal. What do you think?

[00:30:04] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:30:04] Absolutely. And, and Brene Brown talks about, you know, um, that, you know, for you, you need to put, you need to raise your voice. I think the thing that, um, we fear most is for people to look

at us and think that we are stupid or that, you know, our ideas are dumb or whatever it is, you know? And so if you have that fear

[00:30:29] and you are not willing to make yourself vulnerable and put yourself out there. For to raise your voice and say, hang on, I have this idea. This is what I think you will kind of then be, you know, stay in silent and not say, and you need to, to be vulnerable and to put

yourself out there to say, I have an idea, understanding fully, well that other people may not like your idea, or maybe they think that, you know, your idea is dumb or whatever, and [00:31:00] not giving up and kind of saying, okay, I've got a whole bag of ideas.

[00:31:03] What about this one, unDI you get it right. You understand that not all your ideas will land will be welcomed or the Dming for them will be right. You might have an idea now, um, that will fall flat, but five years from now, you see somebody actually implemenDng your idea maybe because the Dme is right.

[00:31:24] So I absolutely believe that vulnerability is important. If you want to have a voice. You have to be vulnerable. I think people oben think that people who have a voice are these strong people who are not afraid of anything. You know? So one of my taglines, I think it's on my WhatsApp profile. It says, 'feel the fear and do it anyway' because it's not like you are not afraid.

[00:31:49] You are afraid, but your need to have to share your ideas and your views and your thoughts, trumps your fear. So, you know, you will, you allow [00:32:00] yourself to be vulnerable and, and, and, and put your ideas out there and put yourself. And I think that's the thing about vulnerability is that your ideas are part of you.

[00:32:09] So you are puQng yourself on the line to be ready to be ridiculed, you know, it could go 50/ 50, you could be really ridiculed, or it could be an idea that lands. And that that is liked by many, that can be implemented.

[00:32:26] **Linda:** [00:32:26] I'm also interested around the idea of the big narraDve that is associated with influence. That it is something big, that it is something hugely impaciuL. And I'd love to hear more from you about the other ways of influence that are impaciuL.

Tracey: So one of the things that I absolutely love is is mentoring. Or supporDng young people, parDcularly young women. I think that is something that oben is done in private on a one to one basis. And someDmes you don't even realize.

[00:33:13] What it is that you, you know, like a project is easy to say, you know, we did this project, it saved so many lives or whatever it is. But when you, when you kind of work with people, you build relaDonships with people. It's a slow process where, you know, you can spend an hour chaQng and you're not even, and this happens to me so many Dmes I'll have people that I meet and I'll be chaQng to them about what

[00:33:42] I don't believe there's anything of significance or whatever, and they'll meet me some way down the line of life. And they'll say to me, Tracey, you remember on such and such a day, half the Dme I don't even remember, that you, and you said this and this and this. It was so impaciuL for me. It influenced me so much.

[00:34:03] It shibed my ideas and my thoughts. And someDmes it's not even people you've met. It's people, maybe this noDon that I started with that is so important to have people who look like you, that you can idenDfy with, that

because then you are able to see yourself in them. And able to learn from them.

[00:34:24] Not that we only learn from those that look like us, but I think it's a bit easier, then if she can do it, I'm sure I can do it as well. So I think for me at the, the, the, the influence that you talking about Linda is on the personal. And I find that that is on the, on,

on, on, on the personal, on people's lives, on, on things that are not in big lights and big lemons.

[00:34:50] Um, it's in the kind of the daily living, um, uh, you know, in, in, in, in the way people live their lives. And I find that also [00:35:00] incredibly fulfilling as well.

[00:35:04] **Linda:** [00:35:04] And then you you've touched on it a bit in terms of the challenges when [00:35:10] kind of living a life of influence or trying to be influential, what would you say to women young and old who desire to live a life of influence, but they feel like they are hitting walls or [00:35:22] obstacles on all [00:35:23] sides.[00:35:24] Be it career, family, entrepreneurial ventures and the, like, what are your thoughts on that?

Tracey: Um, my thoughts are that firstly, you need to back yourself. Um, I think that sometimes we wait for other people to back us. I think that the first, the first big hurdle, um, is to believe in our own power in our own lives to kind of say, you know what?

[00:36:00] [00:36:00] I think I am worthy. And I think that I can do this, you know, um, But also recognizing that your ability to even get, there to say I can back myself is influenced a lot I think by, by the way that you were raised and like the family you come from. And as I, as I said earlier, I'm very lucky that I come from a family that supported me a lot.

[00:36:28] And, um, and my father in particular was a man that, that validated me as a young woman from a very early age. My father made me believe that my voice was worthy and that, you know, so he would listen to me the crazy that he would listen to me. Like he had nowhere else to be. I was saying the most important things in the world that there was no person in the world that was as important at that moment when he listened to [00:37:00] me.

[00:37:00] So he made me believe that my voice was worthy and I had a right to have a voice. So I'm very lucky in that, in that I came into adulthood already believing that. And I think some women in particular, and because of patriarchy and the way we are raised as women, they have to start with that hurdle of, of unlearning and unbelieving things that they've been made to believe about themselves, that they are not worthy, that their voice is not worthy to be heard, that their ideas are not important.

[00:37:39] And that can be a hard internal battle. And I do not minimize the battle that they have to kind of fight to get to the place of themselves believing that I am worthy. And my voice is worthy, and my ideas are worthy, at least of being heard, I'm not saying that they're [00:38:00] worthy of being kind of believed or whatever, but they taste worthy of being heard, um, um, and discussed.

[00:38:08] And the other, I think is to surround yourself with people that see your light, people that have your interest at heart and people that want you to succeed.

[00:38:20] **Linda:** [00:38:20] Thank you so much, Dr. Naledi for joining in the conversation this morning, you've given me lots of food for thought. [00:38:27]

Um, [00:38:28] thank you for being an inspiraDon.[00:38:29] You have [00:38:30] definitely [00:38:30] posiDvely influenced me.

[00:38:34] **Tracey Naledi:** [00:38:34] Thank you so much, Linda. It's been a great conversaDon this morning.

[00:38:43] **Simnikiwe:** [00:38:43] Hi, I'm Simnikiwe Xanga and I am the programme assistant for youth development at the Bertha Centre. It's so exciting zooming in, on one of our very own influential Bertha team women for this episode's good news segment. [00:39:00] Today, we're chatting to Solange Rosa, the new director of the Bertha Centre.

[00:39:05] Solange is an innovative public policy professional skilled in strategy development, policy analysis, government, and integrated sustainable development. She also has a doctorate in law from the University of Stellenbosch. Hi Solange. So exciting to be talking to you today. Um, would you say influence is something some people are born with and why?

[00:39:32] **Solange:** [00:39:32] I think that influence is a practice. I don't think that you're necessarily born with it. It's something that you, as you say, gather as you go along through life, and I think it requires you to be constantly learning, constantly improving yourself, being humble about what you know, and what you don't know, and then being able to follow up your, your words with actions.

[00:39:57] So maintaining a sense of integrity, [00:40:00] um, around what you speak about, um, And, and what you do. And I think that that, that is an ongoing practice you build on. And so, um, as you gather, uh, momentum and learnings and knowledge, um, you're able to influence people more because you're able to articulate, uh, issues more deeply.

[00:40:26] Um, and you're able to follow through on those too, to get people I think, to, To agree with you or to follow what you say. There really does need to be some synchronicity between your words and actions. Um, that integrity is very important.

[00:40:43] **Simnikiwe:** [00:40:43] Thank you so much. I really value what you mentioned around learning as you go, because that's something that, um, I also look forward to in spaces, and at the Bertha Centre, it's something that you get to experience on a daily basis. So having said that, you are an influential woman and we cannot disagree with that, in many spheres you are an influential women. Could you tell us about your career journey and your own journey to influence?

[00:41:17] **Solange:** [00:41:17] Hi. Thank you. Um, Yeah, I think that it's a good to hear that I am influential, I guess I don't think of myself like that. Um, but to talk about my, my career journey, sure, so many years ago I've been on this journey for a long time. Um, I started off, uh, really, uh, working at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies many, many, many years ago, um, as a legal researcher and working on media freedom.

[00:41:49] So my, my career journey started really working in the space of human rights, um, law. And I went overseas for a few years and, um, and worked for Oxfam International, um, as advocacy, a head of advocacy, in a place called East Timor in Indonesia, working on human rights in East Timor. Um, and, and then I also worked in Mozambique um, for a short while on the international campaign to ban landmines. So I did a bit of an international stint, uh, working in, in the human rights sector. Um, I then came back to South Africa um in early 2000 and started working at the Children's Institute at

the University of Cape Town. And so I've come full circle in a sense, um, come back to the university.

[00:42:40] And I was there as a legal researcher, looking at, uh, children's rights in the context of poverty, in particular socioeconomic rights. Um, and that is really my, my passion is to understand what are the key socioeconomic challenges, um, in the context of poverty and inequality [00:43:00] and how can we use a human rights lens to address, um, those challenges?

[00:43:08] So, you know, we have a very strong constitution with a strong bill of rights that is well known around the world. And so that's what frames and underpins the values, um, that I believe in strongly. Um, so after I, I worked at the Children's Institute and then went into government for 10 years. So I spent 10 years as head of policy and strategy at the Department of the Premier and the Western Cape government.

[00:43:33] And that really gave me such important insights into how government works and how, how socioeconomic rights are delivered really. So how they are implemented, what are the challenges? What are the ways in which you can, uh, make different choices, policy choices, and implement differently. Um, so I really had a, a big focus on policy [00:44:00] innovation and worked with the Bertha Centre at the time as well through my side.

[00:44:04] Um, so I came to know and love the Bertha Centre through my work, um, in government, um, on policy innovation, public sector innovation. Um, and then, and then I left government in about 2015 and started consulting on my own. Um, and with some colleagues, and I was doing policy and strategy consulting with national government, um, a bit with provincial government and then with philanthropy and non-government organizations.

[00:44:33] Um, and the Bertha Centre was one of my closest clients. So it's really exciting to be part of the Bertha Centre in a, you know, in a more, um, uh, embedded way. And I feel very passionate, as I said about addressing socioeconomic challenges in South Africa and more broadly, and the way that we can think [00:44:57] innovatively, um, in trying to [00:45:00] address those challenges. So I look forward to the next, um, five years at least of, you know, working with the team and with partners out there, whether they be government or business, or, um, the nonprofit sector, to, together, um, harness different ideas for how we can solve the challenges of poverty and inequality [00:45:22] in South Africa,

[00:45:24] **Simnikiwe:** [00:45:24] Looking to the future, what are some of the things that you would like to influence? Given your current position at the Bertha Centre?

[00:45:33] **Solange:** [00:45:33] Uh, I think that I would like to be able to build a strong team. Um, already have a very strong team at the Bertha Centre, um, but I'd like to solidify it and bring, uh, more diversity and, and I think, um, have a cohesive, um, team with lots of energy and innovative spirit.

[00:45:55] Um, that's on an internal level. And then I think [00:46:00] externally, I would like to be able to influence, um, policy. So I'm very passionate about public policy. Um, and I think that there are key issues at the moment and arisen through COVID, but also pre-existing, um, challenges like the high levels of poverty and the lack of income for many unemployed people.

[00:46:25] Um, and so I think for example, um, a basic income grant is something I would like to put my energy behind and help to influence government, to be able to put a policy like that in place to support unemployed people who have no access to, um, to government grants or to any kind, kind of safety net between the ages of 18 and 60.

[00:46:50] And, um, and then continue to support, uh, young people and youth development. Um, our policy initiatives in this area, uh, [00:47:00] really have a lot of room for innovation and a lot of room to grow. And we have a lot of challenges around high rates of young people being unemployed as well as dropping out of school.

So I would like to be able to [00:47:17] build on what the Bertha Centre, um, has researched, has written about, has acted upon and use that to influence public policy and, um, programming out there, um, at scale to support solutions, to problems in, um, in South Africa, uh, around poverty and inequality more broadly.

[00:47:41] **Simnikiwe:** [00:47:41] Thank you so much for what you've shared with us today.

[00:47:46] **Linda:** [00:47:46] As we've discovered through these women's stories today, I think it's safe to say, say that influence is more of a journey than a destination. Women of influence are weaved all throughout our society. Sometimes [00:48:00] they're neither the ones in the spotlight nor the ones boasting a massive following. They are [00:48:05] however, the ones who've dealt with many challenges and trials and came out stronger and more influential on the other side. They are the ones who manage to affect changes in thinking patterns and behavior. Simply by setting an example in the way they live their own lives.

[00:48:28] **Kentse:** [00:48:28] Thank you for tuning in to, 'Just for a Change' powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the podcast where we offer new perspectives and social innovation and social justice. If you're curious about solving social issues in your community, or believe we can make a positive, tangible difference in the world, then make sure you subscribe so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes.

[00:48:52] Also, remember to have a look at the show notes, if you're interested in finding out more about the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship.