

OLWAM MNQWAZI

FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE | PROGRAMME DESIGNER | RESEARCHER | AUTHOR

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

South African entrepreneur, researcher, author and development practitioner with more than a decade of experience in institution-building, programme development, research, stakeholder engagement, leadership development, civic participation and social-impact initiatives. Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Black Hat Group and Founder and Chairperson of Fruits of Democracy, an NPO established as a platform for democratic dialogue, social cohesion, active citizenship and youth recognition.

Experienced across the complete programme-development lifecycle: identifying development challenges; conceptualising interventions; conducting research; developing concepts and funding proposals; mobilising partners and stakeholders; designing implementation frameworks; coordinating delivery; facilitating engagements; and producing reports and knowledge outputs. Personally leads proposal and concept development for programmes implemented through Black Hat Group and Fruits of Democracy.

Work spans higher education, skills development, maritime development, community engagement, corporate governance, stakeholder management, conflict transformation, youth development, research, democratic participation and local economic development. Academic and public-intellectual work focuses particularly on African leadership, governance, indigenous knowledge and conflict transformation.

CORE EXECUTIVE COMPETENCIES

Institution & Strategy Building	Programme & Proposal Development	Stakeholder & Social Impact Advisory
Research & Knowledge Production	Project & Programme Management	Leadership & Skills Development
Community & Public Participation	Governance & Board Leadership	Fundraising & Partnership Development
Facilitation & Public Speaking	Independent Elections Management	Writing, Publishing & Reporting

CAREER IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- Founded and built two mission-driven institutions: Black Hat Group (2016) and Fruits of Democracy (2015).
- Led concept, proposal and programme development across leadership, research, stakeholder engagement, democracy, youth development and social impact.
- Worked across government, higher education, business chambers, community organisations, SMMEs and civil society.
- Contributed to research on youth employment, employability, post-school education, public transport and transformative leadership.
- Published two books and an HSRC Press chapter on amaXhosa leadership practices and transformative leadership.
- Recognised among the Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans (2015) and Avance Media 100 Most Influential Young South Africans in Leadership & Civil Society (2019).

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Oct 2016 – Present

Black Hat Group / Black Hat Leadership Academy | Gqeberha

- Founded and developed Black Hat into a multidisciplinary leadership-development, research, stakeholder-engagement and advisory organisation; responsible for strategy, business development, programme conceptualisation, partnerships and project oversight.
- Personally conceptualises and authors proposals, concept notes, implementation plans and partnership/funding submissions underpinning organisational projects.
- Leads Stakeholder & Social Impact Advisory assignments including stakeholder mapping, community engagement, public participation, strategic facilitation, conflict-resolution interventions and stakeholder management.
- Oversees research and writing services including fieldwork, data collection, report writing, conference scribing, transcription/translation and postgraduate research support.
- Designs and delivers leadership, governance, workplace discipline, conflict management, problem-solving, workplace essential skills, organisational-development and strategic-planning interventions.
- Leads independent elections management, voter education, constitution review and student/community leadership induction assignments.
- Builds relationships with government, universities, business chambers, corporations, civil society organisations and community institutions to develop collaborative programmes and opportunities.

Selected Black Hat Project Leadership

Impact Africa Limited – Oil & Gas Voluntary Knowledge Sharing — Stakeholder Engagement / Programme Lead

Supported community knowledge-sharing engagements relating to offshore exploration in the Eastern Cape, including stakeholder mapping, programme development, community mobilisation, leadership engagement and reporting across municipalities including Buffalo City, King Sabata Dalindyebo and Nyandeni.

Maritime Business Chamber — Strategic Research & Programme Support

Provided strategic research, proposal development, stakeholder-management and programme-development support, including strategic vision review, report writing, maritime-sector engagements, governance and institutional partnership work.

Volkswagen South Africa — Strategic Workshop Documentation

Delivered high-level strategic workshop scribing and report-writing support.

Nelson Mandela University – Missionvale Campus — Strategy & Safety Review Support

Supported Vision 2020 strategy review and work concerning safety and security on and off campus.

Mandela Bay Development Agency — Development Advisory / Documentation

Contributed to Nelson Mandela Bay post-COVID-19 development advisory work and institutional/event documentation.

Port Elizabeth College & Eastcape Midlands College — Independent Elections / Governance

Supported SRC constitution reviews, student support and SRC election processes.

ETDP SETA Research Chair, Nelson Mandela University — Research Fieldwork

Youth employment and employability fieldwork, data collection and data capturing.

SELECTED PROJECT & PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Imbizo Events – ICT SMME Summits — Research & Content Development Lead

Developed research frameworks and programme content; supported speaker sourcing, knowledge mapping and identification of academic, policy and industry expertise for SMME-focused ICT summit programmes.

Bala Creative / Bala Family Projects — Proposal & Stakeholder Development

Developed funding propositions, sponsorship frameworks, stakeholder strategies and programme concepts for cultural and creative-industry initiatives, including masterclasses, university partnerships, a graduation anthem concept and large-scale family events.

NMU Research Week / Academic Engagements — Chair / Facilitator / Research Contributor

Contributed to university research and knowledge-mobilisation engagements through chairing, facilitation and programme participation on innovation, entrepreneurship and research impact.

MBC x GRI Compliance Awareness — Facilitator / Programme Support

Facilitated business compliance engagement connecting maritime-sector stakeholders with governance and regulatory expertise.

Youth Centre Wellness & Team Building Programmes — Programme Designer / Facilitator

Designed structured wellness, thinking-skills and team-building interventions for youth-centre staff, integrating reflective learning, De Bono thinking methods and participatory activities.

Labour Law / Workplace Training — Programme Designer / Facilitator

Developed and delivered professional learning interventions across workplace discipline, conflict management, problem solving, essential workplace skills, occupational health and safety, and labour-law awareness.

Independent Electoral Services — Project Lead

Managed election planning, voter education, constitution review, election administration and leadership induction for institutional and community structures.

Research & Writing Assignments — Research / Project Lead

Led or supported strategic reviews, conference scribing, report writing, crisis communication, postgraduate data collection, respondent sourcing and institutional knowledge products for public, private and academic clients.

FOUNDER & CHAIRPERSON – FRUITS OF DEMOCRACY

Founder & Chairperson

2015 – Present

Fruits of Democracy NPO | Nelson Mandela Bay / Eastern Cape

- Founded a civic and youth-development platform focused on democratic engagement, social cohesion, intellectual discourse, youth excellence and active citizenship.
- Conceptualises and authors programme proposals, funding approaches and partnership concepts underpinning organisational projects.
- Provides strategic leadership, governance oversight, fundraising, stakeholder development and programme direction.
- Conceptualised and organised dialogues on democracy, heritage and social cohesion, book engagements, community multi-party elections initiatives, youth awards and excursions.
- Led development of PROFILE Magazine as a knowledge and storytelling platform documenting young leaders and organisational alumni; served as editor of the 2017 edition.
- Developed and maintained the organisation's digital presence and stakeholder relationships.

Selected Fruits of Democracy Programmes

Youth Excellence Awards — Founder / Programme Lead

Created a platform recognising young achievers across multiple sectors and using recognition as a mechanism for youth development, visibility and civic inspiration.

Democracy, Heritage & Social Cohesion Dialogues — Concept & Programme Lead

Designed public dialogue platforms enabling young people and civic actors to engage critically with democracy, heritage, identity and social cohesion.

Nelson Mandela Bay Community Indaba — Convening / Programme Leadership

Convened a community-focused platform addressing ethical governance, economic development, youth empowerment and local priorities with civic and institutional partners.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Operations Coordinator – Office of the Executive Dean of Humanities

Jan – Dec 2023

Nelson Mandela University

- Conceptualised and designed implementation plans for strategic projects and initiatives driven from the Executive Dean's office.
- Managed implementation support for key Faculty projects and the Humanities revitalisation trajectory.
- Prepared strategic communications and supported internal and external communication on Faculty initiatives.
- Provided operational coordination for the Executive Dean's day-to-day strategic responsibilities.

Online Curriculum Development – Faculty of Education

Sep – Dec 2023

Nelson Mandela University

- Aligned curriculum content for 11 Advanced Diplomas in TVET.
- Tracked and updated module/unit objectives using CourseTune and generated curriculum reports.
- Supported Form 1 updates for SAQA/accreditation processes.

Project Manager

Nov 2021 – Mar 2022

The Crimson Co | KwaZulu-Natal

- Managed day-to-day project implementation, work plans, field-team coordination, project documentation and donor reporting.
- Prepared qualitative and quantitative progress reports and represented the programme at external and coordination meetings.

- Supported advocacy meetings, workshops, grant applications and accreditation processes.
- Built stakeholder relationships, facilitated monthly field-operation meetings and supported project teams transitioning to online working.

TVET Facilitator – Advanced Diploma in TVET

Jan – Mar 2019

Nelson Mandela University

- Facilitated the Critical Discourse in South African TVET module.
- Provided academic and administrative support to the programme leader and assessed approximately 200 TVET educators.

Junior Researcher – Centre for Integrated Post-School Education & Training (CIPSET)

Sep 2012 – Aug 2016

Nelson Mandela University

- Contributed to ETDPS SETA youth-unemployment research, TVET student-success initiatives and Post-School Education and Training innovation hubs.
- Supported Emerging Voices II research on youth, informal learning and PSET and reviewed South African and international PSET policy environments.
- Coordinated Eastern Cape student conventions involving SRCs from universities, FET/TVET colleges and NGOs.
- Wrote and presented research at academic and policy conferences.

Alumni Relations Satellite Office Coordinator – Missionvale Campus

Jan – Sep 2012

Nelson Mandela University

- Coordinated alumni-office administration, graduate data capture, database maintenance, events and project activities.
- Conducted university-shop and alumni-relations benchmarking and prepared reports.

Administrative Assistant

2006 – 2008

South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)

- Provided office and administrative support and contributed to student-support initiatives.
- Served as a Department of Science & Technology / Thuthuka camp leader.

GOVERNANCE, CIVIC & LEADERSHIP ROLES

Board / Trustee Leadership | 2024 – 2026

Governance oversight, policy and constitutional review, budgeting and planning, governance and dispute resolution.

Board Secretary – Roundtable Social Enterprise | 2020 – Present

Supports interdisciplinary formation of emerging entrepreneurs, resource mobilisation, cooperative enterprise, strategic planning and vision development.

Board Treasurer – Empilweni TB Hospital, Nelson Mandela Bay | 2017 – 2021

Board financial stewardship, fundraising and mobilisation of resources to support the hospital.

Convener – South African Youth Council, Nelson Mandela Metro | Nov 2015 – May 2016

Convened youth organisations, led fundraising and youth-activism projects, and supported AGM processes.

National Director – InkuluFreeHeid | Mar 2013 – Jan 2015

Led community programmes deepening dialogue and social cohesion; mobilised youth for economic discussions and promoted electoral participation and youth agency.

Founding Chairperson – Fundisa Primary Fund | 2010 – 2013

Led career-guidance, school-fee bursary, fundraising and project-management initiatives.

Chairperson – NMMU Student Alumni Society | 2010

Student/alumni leadership and institutional engagement.

Deputy President – NMMU Students' Representative Council | 2009

Student governance and representative leadership.

Leadership Forum Coordinator – NMMU Family Christian Fellowship | 2009

Coordinated student leadership activities and forums.

RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

HSRC Press Chapter — Chapter Author

Mnqwazi, O. (2024). "What amaXhosa leadership practices offer to the discourse on transformative leadership." In Swartz, S., De Kock, T. & Odora Hoppers, C. (eds), Transformative Leadership in African Contexts: Strategies for Just Social Change. HSRC Press.

Learning for Living — Contributing Researcher

Contributed to Baatjes, I. (2018), Learning for Living: Towards a New Vision for Post-School Learning in South Africa. HSRC Press.

Youth Employment & Employability Research — Fieldwork Coordinator

Supported Dr Lesley Powell's research chair work (2018–2019), including data collection, capturing and report writing for MERSETA/ETDP-related research.

Public Transport, Technological Revolutions & Development — Fieldwork / Research Support

Supported Dr Mondli Hlatshwayo's 2022 multi-province research project associated with the BRICS Think Tank, NIHSS and University of Johannesburg.

Books

- Mnqwazi, O. (2022). Leadership: An Insignia More Enduring. Gqeberha: Black Hat Publishers.
- Mnqwazi, O. (2019). Writing the Way: Conversations and Lessons I Wish to Have with You. Gqeberha: Black Hat Publishers.

ACADEMIC PROFILE & EDUCATION

Master of Arts – Conflict Transformation & Management

2024 – Current

Nelson Mandela University

- Full research topic: “Investigating Political Leadership Principles of amaXhosa: Building Blocks to Indigenous Conflict Theory.”

BA Honours – Development Studies

2015 – 2017

Nelson Mandela University

- Coursework included Project Management for Economic Development, Geospatial Methods for Development, Development Policy, Development Theory and a Guided Research Report.

BA – Public Administration & Industrial and Organisational Psychology

2009 – 2011

Nelson Mandela University

- Coursework included local government and administration, comparative government, project management, public policy, organisational behaviour, training and development, conflict management and HR finance.

National Senior Certificate / Matric

2002

Ithembelihle Comprehensive School, Port Elizabeth

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Transformative Leadership Symposium – Zanzibar, Tanzania (2022).
- Education Policy Consortium – Youth Research, Johannesburg (2014).
- Black Management Forum Student Chapter – Students for Social Change, Port Elizabeth (2014).
- South African Sociological Association – Youth Research / Emerging Voices II, Port Elizabeth (2014).
- Desmond Tutu Peace Centre – Youth Activism, Cape Town (2013).
- CERT YRLA Workshop – Youth Research in Nelson Mandela Bay.
- Nelson Mandela University research, leadership and student-governance engagements – chairing, facilitation and panel participation.
- Business and maritime-sector engagements – facilitation on governance, compliance, stakeholder relations and development.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Parker Pen South Africa Ambassador (from September 2022).
- Avance Media – 100 Most Influential Young South Africans in Leadership & Civil Society (2019).
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality – Overall Youth Leader, Mandela-Sisulu Award (2018).
- Mail & Guardian – 200 Young South Africans (2015).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TECHNICAL CAPABILITY

- Corporate Governance Training – facilitated by SEDFA and the B-BBEE Commission.
- B-BBEE Training – facilitated by SEDFA and the B-BBEE Commission.
- Tools and methods: report writing, leadership development, CourseTune, ATLAS.ti, SPSS, Moodle and Microsoft Office.
- Languages: isiXhosa and English. | Driver’s licence: Code 8.

EXECUTIVE VALUE PROPOSITION

Olwam Mnqwazi's professional value lies in the ability to connect ideas, institutions and communities and to take programmes from concept to implementation. His experience combines entrepreneurial institution-building with research, public engagement, governance, proposal development and project delivery.

What I Lead

Capability	Application
Ideas into programmes	Concept development, research, proposals, budgets, partnerships and implementation frameworks.
Stakeholders into partnerships	Government, business, universities, communities, civil society and sector institutions.
Research into public value	Fieldwork, knowledge production, reporting, facilitation, publications and knowledge mobilisation.
Leadership into institutional capacity	Governance, strategic planning, training, coaching, facilitation and organisational development.
Community voice into decision-making	Public participation, civic dialogue, stakeholder engagement, voter education and social accountability.
Projects into measurable delivery	Work planning, coordination, reporting, monitoring, stakeholder management and close-out.

SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL & SECTOR EXPOSURE

Higher Education • Maritime Economy • Skills Development • Youth Development • Civil Society • Local Government • SMME Development • Community Engagement • Corporate Governance • Research & Knowledge Production • Creative Industries • Elections & Democratic Participation

REFERENCES

Dr Lesley Powell

Research Chair: Employment, Employability and Entrepreneurship, Nelson Mandela University
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EXECUTIVE PROFILE • PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • SOCIAL IMPACT