

# PE teen's story helps raise millions



**ZANELE NOBADULA**

**Yoliswa Sobuwa**  
sobuway@timesmedia.co.za

**M**AKING her way onstage in New York last week to address hundreds of smartly turned out socialites, a Port Elizabeth teenager forced herself to relax – as she had a job to do.

Zanele Nobadula, 17, was at the NYC “Growing Up” Gala dinner to tell the 400 guests about Port Elizabeth’s Ubuntu Education Fund and the profound impact it has had on her life.

Hosted at the historic Gotham Hall for the fourth year in a row, the gala – together with Zanele’s story – raised more than \$1.3-million (R19.7-million) to support orphaned and vul-

## New Yorkers dig deep to assist Ubuntu youth project

nerable youngsters in Zwide.

The Ubuntu Education Fund provides household stability and health and educational services to needy children and their families.

The turning point in Zanele’s life came in 2010 when she joined an Ubuntu dance class and learnt to “never stop believing that I could create a better future”.

She was orphaned at a young age when her mother, Busisiwe, died in 2005. Her father had died when she was just a baby.

She was raised by her grandfather, Norman, 80, with the help of her aunt, Bongwiwe, 50.

Speaking about the trip to New York, Zanele said: “I had

never been on a plane before, let alone left the country.

“My grandfather was so excited for me,” the NMMU first-year tourism diploma student said.

“Being in a plane felt like a dream. It was emotional for me as I could not help but think of the days when my aunt worked so hard so that we would not go to bed on an empty stomach.

“Even though New York is a beautiful place, I did not go there for fun but to help change the lives of many children from my area who are in the same situation I was in before I joined Ubuntu,” she said.

“When I stood in front of the 400 people, I just had to relax

and tell them my story. was not representing just myself but also the kids from my community.

“I am very proud of what I did and hope the next generation will also get the same support and assistance I did from the Ubuntu Education Fund.

“I could not have made it this far if it was not for the fund.

In the next couple of years my family will watch me with pride as I walk up on stage to receive my diploma,” she said.

Zanele recalled her devastation when her grandmother died in 2008.

“She was everything to me and my siblings [twin brother Kwanele and sister Thabisa, 20]. When she became sick and

bedridden . . . it hurt to see her like that.

“We did not have a normal childhood like other kids because we had to look after her.”

Ubuntu Education Fund external relations manager Nozibele Qamngana said the funds raised at the gala would help toward the centre’s “Vision 2020”.

“We chose Zanele because she has a story behind the face,” Qamngana said.

“We wanted someone who will represent the rest of the community, not just herself.

“We are hoping to expand our early childhood development centre to three more classrooms and to tap into vo-

educational training and create a sustainable institution,” Qamngana said.

At the gala dinner, Ubuntu founder and chief executive Jacob Lief introduced an ambitious five-year expansion plan.

“The Ubuntu model . . . has to be about what it truly takes to change a child’s life,” Lief said.

“We are fuelled by the belief that our children at Ubuntu deserve what children all around the world deserve, and that is everything.”

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