

Examining diversity challenges with Maxinne Mboweni from Ogilvy

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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Today, we are still seeing issues with diversity in the creative industry.



Maxinne Mboweni, creative copywriter at Ogilvy Cape Town

Maxinne Mboweni is a creative copywriter who recently joined Ogilvy Cape Town. As a young, Black woman in the industry, Mboweni has experienced challenges that are not a unique discourse - and seeks a transformation that sees an expanded and diverse reality.

We talk to her about the challenges she has faced, her work, and what she believes could push the industry forward...

■ ***Tell us a bit more about yourself and your role?***

I am a creative copywriter, which means I am responsible for general everyday brand communications as well as brainstorming and conceptualising larger campaign ideas. Essentially, I tell compelling brand stories across multiple platforms including print, radio, digital and television.

■ ***What do you love most about your work?***

I love brainstorming concepts and seeing them come to life. I also love solving clients' business concerns with engaging pieces of creativity. I love having my creativity challenged and refined.

■ ***What are some of the challenges you have faced as a young, Black woman in the industry?***

I've had to deal with some of the typical challenges; being the only Black female creative in the studio, having my ideas shut down or misunderstood due to a lack of cultural understanding, and the expectation that I can write in any one of the 11 official languages based on my race.

Working in places where few people look like me or share similar first-hand cultural experiences can also be alienating. I am also entrusted with the task of bringing all Black ideas to the party. It can be a lot of pressure, as I know my background may not be representative of the entire Black population.

■ **How have you worked to overcome these challenges, if possible?**

When I first began my career I think I was hypersensitive to my race and how demoralised I felt being the only/one of the few female Black creatives. Over the years, however, and as I've gained more experience, I've learned the importance of building rapport, being unapologetically myself, and establishing a strong creative point of view that people respect. I have also learned how to connect with people who on the surface I may appear to have nothing in common.

Additionally, I also work along with my fellow IAB Youth Council members to spearhead initiatives that help push the industry forward on issues of diversity.



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■ **What are some of the challenges adland is facing currently, in terms of diversity and inclusion?**

I think a huge challenge is in the recruitment process. 'Culture fit' is often used, but what people really mean when they say that is someone they'd enjoy grabbing a drink with - which leads to the same type of people being hired repeatedly.

I think people are beginning to realise that hiring decisions have to be based on more than how well a candidate will fit in. As a person of colour, you won't always fit in, but that's part of what makes diversity so great; having people with different perspectives and viewpoints. Additionally, inclusion is essential; don't just hire people of colour, but also nurture their growth. Ensure they are paid competitively, listen to their ideas, give them the big briefs. Make sure more people of colour reach C-suite!

■ **What is the best advice you have ever received?**

Don't just go to work, try to build a meaningful career. Whatever that looks like to you.

■ **What changes would you like to see for women and people of colour in the creative industry?**

Naturally, I would like to see more diversity. As long as creatives are only drawn from a small fraction of society, they will only be interested in telling a small fraction of stories. It would be beneficial to society as a whole to move towards a more dynamic industry with more innovative and interesting storytellers since what we see in the media has such a huge impact on us. Variety is after all the joy of life.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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