

How an unexpected passion for property altered Chelsea Brown's career path

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Chelsea Brown is a student representative at the South African Institute of Valuers (SAIV) Northern Branch executive. A University of Johannesburg alumna, Brown has found her passion in property, especially after recognising the many opportunities the field holds for SA's youth.



Chelsea Brown, student representative, South African Institute of Valuers (SAIV) Northern Branch executive

Closing the chapter on this year's #YouthMonth, Brown shares a bit about her journey in her chosen career, her achievements thus far, and how some of the challenges young people face in her industry could be overcome.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

I was born and raised in Johannesburg, where I still reside. I am currently 22 years old and I matriculated back in 2015. I then went on to complete my Bcom finance degree at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am currently doing my honours in property valuations and management at UJ, as well as working as a candidate valuer at DDP.

What drew you to a career in the property industry?

I started off studying Bcom Accounting at UJ, thinking I would one day become a CA. By the end of my first year, I realised that was not where my passions lay. I then switched to the Bcom Finance degree in my second year which allowed me to take Property Valuations and Management as my elective. This allowed me to completely drop accounting by my third year. Although my journey may have started with me running away from accounting, I realised property was actually something I had an interest in, especially after realising the various opportunities it hosts for the youth of today. In today's economic climate, I think it's important that we consider what we study wisely.



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What are some of your achievements in your field of which you are most proud?

I am most proud of being part of the first Women's Property Network (WPN) committee at UJ. I am extremely proud that we were able to start the UJ chapter last year to help draw an interest to the property industry and the various career paths one could follow. This was extremely important to me because many students do not necessarily consider property valuations as a degree or even a career path. And, as previously mentioned, it is important that we, as the youth, truly consider what we study, considering how saturated the job market is in South Africa and our high youth unemployment rates.

I am also extremely proud of being a student representative for the South African Institute of Valuers on the Northern Branch executive. It's inspiring working with such passionate individuals who have made it a personal mission to provide the youth opportunities in the property valuations field as they are successfully doing through their mentorship programme.



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■ ***What aspects of your field are you most passionate about?***

I am most passionate about learning and engaging with others. It is not a field where one works in isolation, but rather encourages networking and communication. Through that, I am able to learn new ways of approaching challenges.

■ ***What or who inspires you?***

My uncle inspires me the most. He is honestly like a father to me. Through his hard work and dedication, he's offered me and my family opportunities we wouldn't have otherwise had. And I am eternally grateful.

■ ***What are some of the challenges young people face in your industry? How would you suggest they be overcome?***

A major issue young people in my industry face is simply access to the industry. In many industries in South Africa, such as the finance industry, a simple Google search will bring about various job opportunities and internships. However, in the property industry, especially within the valuations space, this is not the case.

I think this could be overcome by embracing technology and making such opportunities available on various job portals, social media platforms, as well as their own websites. This would allow a lot of youth more access to the space. As the youth, we definitely understand the value and importance of having experience.



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■ ***The Covid-19 crisis is likely to have a significant impact on the opportunities available for professional development for young South Africans. Do you have any words of encouragement?***

I would say do not underestimate the value of working for a smaller firm or even gaining experience through volunteering. You would be surprised how much you could learn. Especially from a small dedicated team who is invested in you.

■ ***What, to you, is the significance of Youth Month in 2020?***

Youth Month has encouraged many of the youth to highlight racism and racial injustices in our private institutions. We have seen this through hashtags such as #WakeupStAnnes #WearetiredStMartins and #TimesupStMarys. And I think it's important that we are once again having these conversations. As many BIPOC have sacrificed a lot to get their children into these spaces. And it's about time that they're treated with respect and dignity.

■ ***You've been voted SA's president for the day. What's the first thing on your to-do list?***

Given the Covid-19 crisis, the first thing on my to-do list would be disassociating from the Red Ants. It goes against human rights and human dignity to be evicting citizens and tearing down shacks during this pandemic, whether lawful or not. As we have seen throughout history, being on the right side of the law does not mean being on the right side of humanity.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy_hullaba_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at

sindy@bizcommunity.com

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