

Letter to thank 18twenty8:

I would like to thank 18twenty8 for allowing me to share my story and to give honour to them for giving females hope for a better future.

I, Geronay Michaela Whitebooi was born and raised in Port Elizabeth. At the age of 11, my father passed away and things at home wasn't the same as it use to be. My mother had to take on the role of the breadwinner and up to this day I don't know how my mom could always find a way to provide for us. I moved to Pretoria at the age of 14 to attend the TuksSport High School to make a success of my academic and judo career. It was difficult to leave my family behind, not knowing at that age why it was all happening to me. Today I am grateful towards my mom for allowing me to leave the house knowing it was difficult on her to let her baby girl grow up so fast and be independent. I am grateful towards the High Performance Centre and SRSA for giving me the opportunity to participate in my sports and focus on my academics at the same time. Today I am an Internal Audit Honours Graduate and an Africa Champion in my sport and none of this would have been possible without the sacrifices that God has set on my path for a dream that only today I see is reality.

The opportunity to apply for the 18twenty8 bursary was brought forward by my manager from TuksSport. I immediately applied for the bursary and sent all the needed information to gain a spot to be select for the bursary. I applied for the bursary, because I needed financial help with the tuition fees. The University of Pretoria has helped me significantly to pay my fees, however there was still outstanding fees that had to be covered.

As a sports student it is difficult to find bursaries that will find you academically due to the fact that that the bursary holders might think that you will choose your sports career over what you are studying for. 18twenty8 has helped me financially even though I am a professional sportswoman, due to the fact that I have shown that my academics is as important as my sports.

As a sportswoman, you need a profession to fall back on if your sports career has come to an end or you may occur some type of injury that prevents you from doing your sports for the rest of your life.

18twenty8 has given me the peace of mind to persue my career that I have studied for without having to work backwards and repay debt. They have provided me help that will make me a success female that can support her mother and give back to her mom for being her hero.

Not many people get the opportunity to study at a tertiary institution and to know that you get to finish your studies without having to stress about finances is hope towards a bright future.

I have participated in judo for over 10 years now and as any sportsman, you only have a certain time limit to succeed in the dreams and goals you have set up for your sports career.

My career choice or line of work I want to do is forensic auditing. Auditing has many different directions that one can choose and due to my love for investigations into crime, I choose forensics the moment it was placed in your work program for the Honours degree. I know it won't be a easy road and there will be many other smaller goals that I will have to achieve to get to be a forensic auditor but one thing I learnt from my sport is that failing is just an opportunity to get back up and to recreate a different method to get to the same goal.

Message to young females:

I can't speak for every female in the world, and I can't place myself in the shoes of the girls that is not able to achieve their dreams today. However, today I know that there is a dream in all of our hearts, no matter how small the dream may seem to others or how insignificant people may think it is. Hold onto that dream, do all that you can to achieve that dream. It will be a difficult and long road no matter what path you take, just know that all the pain and suffering won't be for no reason. God has a reason for everything that is placed on your path.

Sports achievements 2019:

Africa Championship 2019 Gold medalists
Africa Games 2019 silver medalist
Africa open Dakar 2019 bronze medalist
South Africa Championship 2019 Gold Medalist