

My name is Jamilla Muhammed. Due to financial reasons I was unable to fund the final year of my BCom(Economics) degree at the University of Pretoria in 2018 because of outstanding fees owed since my first year in 2016. I applied for many bursaries but I wasn't accepted by any and was very disheartened.

I applied to 18twenty8 in 2018 when I was searching online for organisations that could possibly help me. 18twenty8 helped me by paying all the outstanding fees that I owed as well as the 2019 registration and tuition fee for one outstanding module for the completion of my degree. The women of 18twenty8 did not only empower me, they also inspired me. It is a very powerful thing to have people I have known for such a short time believe in me. I now believe in myself more because of the faith that they have placed in me. Because I no longer have to worry about finances I am able to be more focused on pursuing academic excellence.

In December 2018 the organisation invited me to an event hosted by UN Women where women from all walks of life came together to help build each other up. I felt blessed to be in a space with such powerful and influential women. 18twenty8 does not only provide financial assistance but also a sense of sisterhood and support. I am truly grateful for all the opportunities they have given me.

Being given the opportunity to serve as a youth facilitator at this year's undergraduate leadership development camp was an amazing experience.

Not only was I able to receive training from seasoned professionals on topics such as leadership, personal branding and mental health, the training also provided me with the opportunity to network with phenomenal women who I have learnt so much from. We were constantly learning from one another by sharing our thoughts and experiences, while also sharing many laughs. The training covered relevant information that doesn't usually form part of formal education teaching guidelines. The training I received will help me as I continue with my postgraduate studies and professional career as well as on a personal level.

My entire experience with 18twenty8 has given me a better understanding of myself and has shown me that there is so much love and compassion in the world.

I plan on continuing to BCom Honours level in 2020 and would like to specialise in Development Economics or Financial Economics. These are the branches of Economics that interest me the most. I hope that in future I can also inspire young women the way the women of 18twenty8 have inspired me.