

A Personal Essay: My Background and Future Aspirations

My name is Iviwe Tyelentombi, and my journey thus far has been shaped by my upbringing in the Eastern Cape, specifically in a small town called Willowvale, known locally as Gatyane. Born in 2006, I have grown up under the care of my grandmother, who has been a constant source of support and inspiration in my life. The values she instilled in me and the love she provided played a crucial role in my formative years.

I attended primary school in Willowvale, where I developed a passion for learning and a strong desire to excel academically. I completed my primary education in 2018, a significant milestone that marked the beginning of my transition into a more extensive world of opportunities. However, this was just the starting point of a journey that would ultimately lead me to Cape Town.

In 2019, my life took a new direction as I moved to the Western Cape, specifically to a community known as Khayelitsha. This area, while rife with challenges such as crime and drug-related issues, presented me with better educational opportunities that I could not ignore. I moved in with my aunt, a dedicated nurse at Tygerberg Hospital, and my uncle, who works at one of the Dischem warehouses. They welcomed me with open arms, and I also shared a home with my three younger cousins, whom I often took under my wing.

Khayelitsha was a stark contrast to the quieter life I had known in Gatyane. The vibrancy of the city, coupled with the struggles within the community, created a complex environment that would influence my growth as an individual. Enrolling in Esangweni High School, I seized the chance to pursue my education vigorously. My efforts paid off when I graduated in 2023 with five distinctions—an achievement I take immense pride in, highlighted prominently on my profile page.

Currently, I am pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering at the University of Cape Town (UCT). This opportunity is not merely a stepping stone for me but rather a dream come true. The field of electrical engineering fascinates me because it lies at the heart of understanding and innovating the technologies that drive our modern world. As I delve deeper into my studies, I have set my sights on specializing in robotics in my third year. The intersection of engineering and artificial intelligence offers limitless potential, and my goal is to emerge as one of the most effective robotic engineers in the world.

The field of robotics is captivating for several reasons. First, it serves as a bridge between technology and humanity, offering solutions to problems that were once insurmountable. In a world increasingly dependent on technology, robotics holds the potential to streamline processes, increase efficiency, and even improve quality of life. For individuals interested in creating machines that can assist in everyday tasks or tackle complex challenges, a career in robotics represents a chance to make a significant impact.

Moreover, the diversity of applications within robotics means that students entering this field can tailor their focus based on their interests. From healthcare solutions to agricultural advancements, the scope is vast and continually evolving. The allure of working on projects that can enhance lives across various sectors is a motivating factor for many aspiring engineers.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges faced by individuals pursuing a career in robotics, especially when hailing from a disadvantaged community like Khayelitsha. The challenges can often feel overwhelming, making it easy to question one's potential or to feel held back by circumstances beyond one's control. I have often encountered individuals sceptical of my ambitions due to my background, emphasizing the obstacles that can come from my community.

Yet, I firmly believe that my origins in Khayelitsha do not define my limit. On the contrary, the adversities I have faced and the resilience I have developed in navigating them contribute to my strength and determination. My unique perspective will enable me to approach challenges differently, an asset in a field that values innovation and creative problem-solving.