

Ondela Mlandu is shifting the Africa travel mindset

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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Contiki Holidays has announced its nominees for its "35 Under 35 Changemakers 2019", with five South Africans making the final cut - which will see one of them crowned as the new Sustainability Ambassador for Contiki. And as June is Youth Month, we thought it fitting to celebrate one of those changemakers who is making a difference in sharing her love for African history and travel.



The 35 Under 35 is an annual awards programme that celebrates young people who are changing the world.

Ondela Mlandu, a 28-year-old-black-female is passionate about all things travel. As a multimedia journalist who has written for several publications on travel; a radio host and content producer, Mlandu is driven by her love for the African continent and sharing its history with the world.

"The gift of travelling is one I don't take for granted. Travelling exposed me to the world and how it's always better to keep an open mind.

"Realising the growth and knowledge gained from trying new experiences and exposing myself to different cultures, did wonders for me as a young black female. That is why travelling and exposing millennials to the country of South Africa, this continent and the travel industry is important to me."

“ I'm all about shifting mindsets and exposing the ins and outs of travelling especially as it may seem to be intimidating to someone who isn't used to it. ”

Mlandu shares more with us about being nominated as one of the under 35 changemakers; what inspires her about Africa and travel and what other youth can do to be a changemaker within their own communities...

■ ***Firstly, congratulations on being chosen as one of the Top 5 South African nominees for Contiki's "35 Under 35" programme! What does it mean to you to be celebrated as a young changemaker?***

It's such a great honour to be selected and recognised as a young changemaker. The 35 Under 35 programme is giving the youth a platform to have a voice. It's also a great initiative to showcase some of the incredible work, the youth is doing across the globe.

■ ***What do you hope to achieve should you be chosen as Contiki's new Sustainability Ambassador?***

I hope to showcase the many different cultures and creeds of Africa. My biggest aim is to create awareness of fun and exciting travel destinations in South Africa and the African continent, especially the lesser known regions.

■ ***As a content producer, why do you think it's important to share Africa history and travel with the world, and more importantly, the youth – What sort of changes do you think this could inspire?***

What excites me the most about Africa is the people and the stories they have to share about our continent. There are multiple tribes whose customs, beliefs and traditions remain unspoken of. The way our African costume designs and film sets were portrayed in *Black Panther's* mythical Wakanda is a good start to show the world the riches of Africa. If our continent is celebrated by many around the world we owe it to ourselves to do the same. Our narrative should be shared by us as Africans. We can only do that by educating ourselves on our history.

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Africa has lost 70% of the elephant population in 40 years. They are a key note species in our ecosystem. This is gentle Sebakwe, who is the iconic ellie found on @official_amarula bottles. Sebakwe was born in Zimbabwe in the early 80s. He is the dominant male in the elephant camp. I've never come across an elephant that knows his camera angles so well. It was such a delight to be in the presence of the oldest male in the herd ❤️👍👏

A post shared by [Ondela M.](#) (@ondela_m) on Feb 8, 2018 at 3:11am PST

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■ ***What inspires you and your love for travel? What about Africa excites you?***

I take pleasure in the exploration of diverse lifestyles, culture and settings. This is an interest I have been so able to feed through travel and writing. The thing about travelling is that, I'm continuously learning and upskilling myself as I do something I love. Some of the greatest struggle heroes hail from this continent, including powerful African women stories. The more I read up on the African continent, the more excited I get to want to know more.

■ ***Can you tell us more about your show on 2Oceans Vibe and what it comprises – why do you think it's important to educate South African's on what is happening around the world, as well as in our own country?***

My radio show on 2Oceansvibe Radio, Take a Trip with Ondela M has allowed me to combine my two loves, media and travel. Take a Trip with Ondela M aims to excite and inform our listener's about affordable South African destinations and how to make travel accessible, informative and exciting. The show provides content on adventures and places worth trying out, travel insurance, travel photography and so much more, while also providing listeners with historical information about the different places in South Africa.

■ ***If you had to highlight a main focus of African history and travel, what would it be and why?***

Something that I am currently working on, is a written piece contrasting the linkage of South African tribes to other SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries. I want to focus on the similarities such as customs, traditions and similar languages between South Africa and countries up north.

■ ***How will you, as a changemaker, make a difference to the lives of South Africa's youth? How has your own life driven you to this point?***

I'm all about shifting mindsets and exposing the ins and outs of travelling especially as it may seem to be intimidating to someone who isn't used to it. Travelling exposed me to the world and how it's always better to keep an open mind.

■ ***Is there anything you'd like to share with our readers for Youth Month – how could they be a changemaker within their own communities?***

It's about finding something you are passionate about, then creating awareness around that passion. If you see something you have a need to correct in your community then do it. It's never too late to start, no matter how small the progress. It's all about purpose, determination and finding a solution, even if one person is impacted. That also matters.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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