

Member Spotlight

African Leadership Academy Johannesburg, South Africa

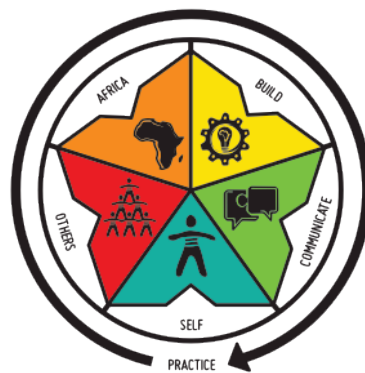
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“E-Fest was an experience that allowed me to understand the power of collaboration and the potential of dreams. This directly fed into my leadership journey as I saw that leadership can only blossom and truly be effective when it’s a collaborative effort” – Gigi Ngcobo

Gigi is a 19-yr old from South Africa who just finished her second term at [African Leadership Academy](#) (ALA) by completing Enterprise-Fest, the annual milestone of the first year Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) curriculum. E-Fest is a premier showcase of original ideas that ALA’s first-year students have incubated over the course of three months through our Original Ideas for Development (OID) Lab.

Our OID Lab is a well-tested incubator for youth development and innovation that makes up part of our two-year Entrepreneurial Leadership program. Literally formatted to be a laboratory for youth-generated ideas, the 11-week long OID Lab uses ALA’s unique human-centered entrepreneurship approach, a design thinking model known as BUILD (Believe-Understand-Invent-Listen-Deliver). Steering students through the process of identifying needs and root causes in the students’ home communities, invested teacher-coaches help students connect possible solutions to the students’ passions, skills, and interests while developing empathy. Students stretch their creativity as they generate ideas



utilizing the wealth of opportunities in Africa; meanwhile, through feedback, they also learn to think more critically as they dissect their ideas and solutions for efficacy and sustainability.

Students journey through the OID Lab starting with BUILD’s Believe step. Before even considering a project to launch or a need to address, students analyze their mental models of leadership, exploring the leadership paradigms with which they most closely align. With making a leadership impact in clear view, students like Gigi open their OID Toolkit — a start-to-finish idea incubation workbook designed at ALA — to unearth social innovation. Gigi always felt she could make a difference, but going through the OID Toolkit created a real aha moment for her. She realized not only that her potential was even greater than what she had imagined, but that she could uncover the real needs affecting Africa and produce an original solution. Like all students, Gigi synthesized her Original Idea — a two-week drama camp for empowering teenage girls through a professionally and powerfully written executive summary.

After completing executive summaries, students are placed in pan-African groups based around common themes. For Gigi, this meant she was paired with teammates from vastly different parts of the continent — Kenya and Nigeria — who shared a similar art-focused passion but with divergent approaches. This convergence of diversity is designed to spark rich conflict that produces innovative ideas, as well

African Leadership Academy (ALA) brings together the most promising 16-19 year-old leaders from Africa and beyond for an innovative two-year educational program designed to prepare each student for a lifetime of leadership on the continent. ALA will transform Africa by identifying future leaders with potential; creating learning environments that develop intellectual and leadership capabilities through practice; and building a network that connects these leaders to opportunities that accelerate their trajectory.



as push students' ability to work under pressure with new teammates. About this, Gigi reflected, "My past experiences with group work have never been successful. Yet after a grueling term I have obtained a new experience that was challenging, but that ultimately allowed me to achieve growth and healing." Students also add to their knowledge base a new set of change-making tools: logic models (Theory of Change), business models, and sustainability measures.

Finally, after three months and over 50 hours of in-class time (to say nothing of the countless hours outside of class) students prepare for E-Fest. Pressed to deliver a TED-like 10-minute pitch about their ideas, students stand on stage before their peers and elders in the hopes that their venture might persuade the judges. Knowing full well that the top ideas are chosen to join the Student Enterprise Programme (SEP) in their second year, students nervously deliver their pitches. Gigi's team, wowed at E-Fest with their version of a LinkedIn portal that connects artists from across the continent to use their abilities to collaborate on social causes that have an impact on the continent. Gigi's team won a spot in the incubator and she will spend the next year preparing to launch Attribution.

Just as with any experiential activity, the power of an experience is in the reflection, synthesis, and application of learning. As such, once the dust of E-Fest has settled, students engage in a staged reflection process where they examine their teamwork, personal performance, and growth against predetermined goals. Reflections are added to other components of students' self-assessment and shared through a Leadership Journey Report, which goes out with every report card and transcript. About this term, Gigi self-assessed her journey thus far with the following statement:



The skills of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy were the skills I kept applying to (improve my teamwork skills). The group performed a skit for our final presentation. We moved away from conventional arrangements and tried to push ourselves. My effectiveness in the group was a result of being more aware of how my actions affect others. This meant I was challenged and had to apply all I'd been taught — particularly the opportunity to be a facilitator. I felt comfortable in culminating the group strengths and utilizing them. The biggest issue I faced was controlling my energy. It's an issue I'll actively work on next term.

ALA students require more maturation before they are ready to make OID concepts into realities, yet in just a few short years, more than a few young change-makers have already launched their projects with much success. Priscilla Semphere (Malawi) & Hayat Mohammed (Ethiopia) launched the [Ekari Book Series](#) and [PenAfrica](#) and have already spoken at TEDx events and shared the stage with

Chimamanda Adichie. Yonathon Dejene (Ethiopia) took his idea from the OID Lab and translated it into a spot at the renowned Draper University in San Mateo, CA and is currently launching [Raccoon](#) to bring financial fluency to a new generation. Ellen Chilemba (Malawi) morphed her OID for women's empowerment in Malawi to create Tiwale and two years later won the [Ashoka Youth Innovations for Employment in Africa](#). Recently Julius Shirima (Tanzania) was awarded the [Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence](#) for his OID, [Darecha](#). Will you see Gigi and Attribution making waves throughout the continent soon? We hope so. Yet ALA understands that not every student's path is paved with entrepreneurial ventures. ALA believes, however, the path to peace and prosperity in Africa will be paved by entrepreneurial leaders.



African Leadership Academy Global Scholars Program

practice leadership by working in social ventures in the Johannesburg community, learn from chats with prominent entrepreneurial leaders in South Africa, build a global network with other young leaders from around the world and discover the history, beauty and diversity of Africa. To apply or for more information, visit: alasummer.org.

The [Global Scholars Program \(GSP\)](#) is a three-week, global leadership summer program for teens aged 15-19 from around the world. Built around ALA's unique Entrepreneurial Leadership and African Studies curriculum, GSP prepares future leaders to explore their potential to create widespread change in Africa and around the world. Participants