

NEWSLETTER



Written By : Precious Maroga

First semester Highlights | 2025

Welcome to the first edition of our 2025 Opal Students Newsletter , a space to celebrate our journey, share our milestones, and reflect on the growth and spirit that continue to shape us.

As we continue the year, let this be a reminder that Opal is more than just student accommodation — it's where futures are nurtured, leadership is born, and lifelong memories are made.

LIVE.LEARN.CONNECT

This year started with incredible energy. From movie nights under the stars and impactful community initiatives to leadership elections and global collaborations, Opal Students has stood united in purpose, culture, and care.

OPAL
STUDENTS

This newsletter captures the heart of who we are: a home, a movement, and a community rooted in Ubuntu. Through these pages, we honour your efforts, your spirit of togetherness, and the countless moments that made semester 1 unforgettable.

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Movie Night Under the Stars | 24 February 2025

To ease into the academic year and foster a strong sense of community, Opal Students kicked off 2025 with a heartwarming Movie Night Under the Stars on 24 February. Held in the open courtyard surrounded by the peaceful evening breeze, students gathered with blankets, chairs, and wide smiles to enjoy a relaxing and cozy night under the sky.

The featured film of the evening was “Tarot”, a thrilling and suspenseful choice that had everyone on the edge of their seats. As students huddled under the stars, they were treated to complimentary popcorn and refreshing juice, creating the perfect movie experience, simple, thoughtful, and full of warmth.

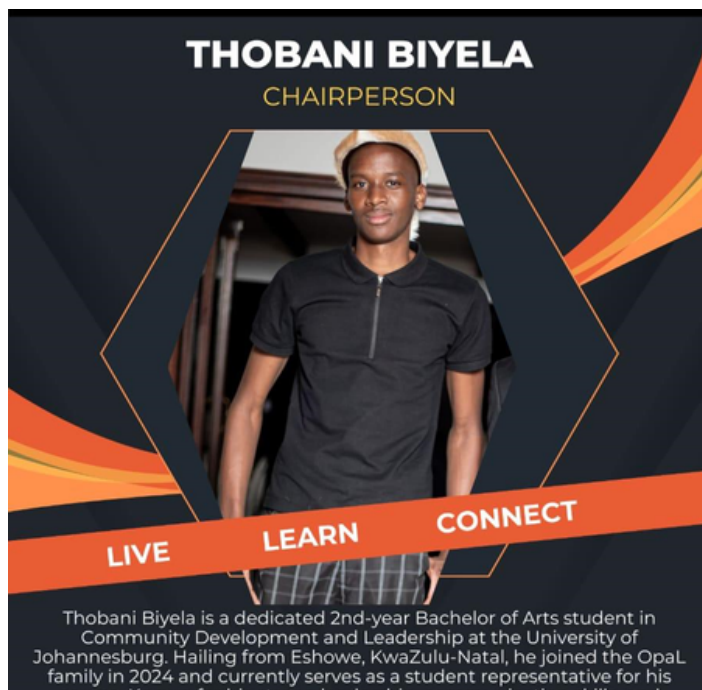


But beyond the entertainment, the night was a powerful tool for connection. In an interview with one of our first-year students, she shared how overjoyed she was when she heard about the event. “I was nervous because I didn’t know anyone yet,” she said. “But when I heard about movie night, I thought maybe this is my chance to meet people and make friends — and I did.”

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Opal Student Leadership Elections | From 28 February 2025

At the end of February, we began a highly anticipated chapter of student representation: the Opal Students Leadership Elections. Students nominated their peers, and the excitement grew as nominees presented their manifestos with passion, vision, and a commitment to positive change. The election process encouraged transparency and inclusivity, as voting lines were opened shortly after presentations. On both Naturena Campus and Primula House, students actively participated in shaping their leadership teams. The final announcement of elected leaders marked the beginning of a new era of student engagement and growth. These individuals will play a pivotal role in enhancing life at Opal, and we cannot wait to see their ideas come to life.



Together, these leaders form the heart of Opal Student Life, ensuring our values of leadership, service, unity, and empowerment are upheld across all residences. Let's support them as they work to make 2025 an unforgettable year for all Opal Students!

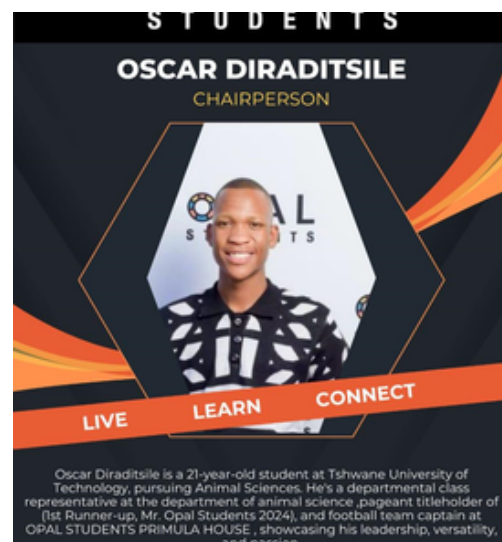
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Meet Your Elected 2025 Opal Student Leaders

Following a transparent and engaging election process, Opal Students proudly introduced the newly elected student leadership teams for Naturena, Primula House, and Bono House. These student leaders are here to serve, inspire, and represent their fellow residents — committed to building a home where every voice matters and every student thrives.

Naturena Leadership Team

1. Chairperson – Thobani Biyela
2. Deputy Chairperson – Mthokozisi Thaele
3. Secretary – Matshepo Makgopa
4. Sports Officer – Mandla Tebane
5. Student Life Assistant – Simfumene Ndwandwe
6. Transport Assistant – Tebatso Tsotetsi
7. Versatile Leader – Simelokuhle Masango



Primula House Leadership Team

1. Chairperson – Oscar Diraditsile
2. Deputy Chairperson – Samantha Mathebula
3. Secretary – Antoni Maluleka
4. Sports Officer – Thabo Mbombi
5. Student Life Assistant – Arnold Mahobatlou
6. Transport Assistant – Amufunaho Sikhwari
7. Versatile Leader – Liberty Nkosi

Bono House

Versatile Leader – Thembi Mtshweni

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Community Care: Opal Pad Drive & Food Drive

In a strong spirit of Ubuntu and student-led change, we proudly launched two impactful social responsibility initiatives: the Opal Pad Drive and the Opal Food Drive. These projects were born out of a simple but powerful idea — that no student should ever have to choose between dignity and survival. Through these efforts, students came forward to donate sanitary towels and non-perishable food items to support fellow students facing financial hardship or personal challenges. What started as a single act of kindness quickly became a movement of solidarity. The overwhelming response showed the heart of the Opal community — proving that when students come together, meaningful change is not only possible, but unstoppable.

These initiatives are ongoing, and we continue to encourage all students, alumni, and supporters to contribute. Together, we can ensure that no one at Opal feels unseen, unsupported, or left behind.



Donation details

Account Holder: Opal Students Empowerment Foundation
Account Type: Savings
Account Number: 10190634896
Branch: Rosebank
Branch Code: 4305
Reference: Pad Drive
Email: foundation@opalstudents.co.za
Every contribution counts. Let's continue building a culture of care, dignity, and collective responsibility.

Written By: Precious Maroga

Mental Health Mondays With Precious Maroga | 17 March 2025

Understanding the importance of mental wellness in a high-pressure academic environment, Miss Opal 2024, Precious Maroga, introduced Mental Health Mondays, a weekly digital campaign promoting mental health awareness and self-care. Each Monday, Precious shared insightful posts addressing anxiety, burnout, emotional resilience, and coping strategies.

The initiative created an open space for students to engage, reflect, and support one another. By normalizing these conversations, Opal is championing emotional wellbeing and encouraging students to prioritize their mental health just as much as their academic goals. These posts have already sparked positive discussions and deeper connections across our campuses.

In the second episode of Mental Health Mondays, we focused on a topic that deeply affects many students — stress and burnout. As the semester picked up pace, we opened up a conversation around what stress really is, how it manifests in our lives, and the importance of recognizing burnout before it spirals. The post explored practical ways to counteract stress, especially within academic settings where pressure can feel constant. We shared strategies for managing workload, setting healthy boundaries, and prioritizing rest. Most importantly, the episode emphasized that mental health conversations are not a sign of weakness — they are a form of strength. By breaking the stigma and normalizing these discussions, we're fostering a community where support and self-care are valued, and no one has to suffer in silence.

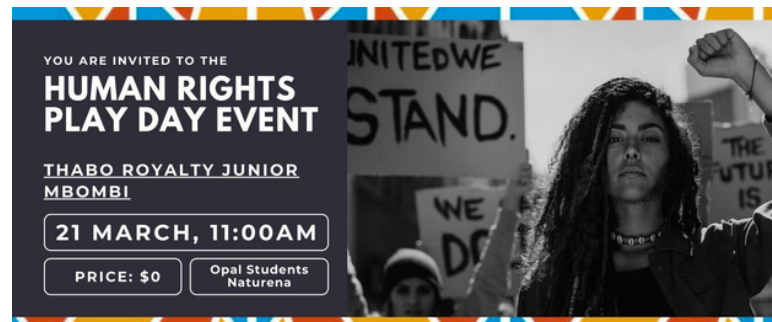


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Human Rights Day Celebration – The Right to Play | 21 March 2025

To honor Human Rights Day, Opal Students partnered with Youth for Human Rights International to host a vibrant and impactful event themed “The Right to Play.” Held at Opal Apartments, the celebration was a beautiful blend of education, entertainment, and empowerment, reminding students of their right to freedom, dignity, and expression.



The event featured captivating performances, powerful educational segments, and inspirational guest speakers from across the globe. Our very own Miss Opal 2024, Precious Maroga, served as the dynamic Master of Ceremonies, leading the event with grace and energy.

The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Andrew Walker, a respected global property investor and founder of SAPIN, who shared his journey and the importance of understanding and advocating for human rights. Adding to the inspiration, Shane Born, an international bestselling author and business coach, gave a compelling talk on freedom of expression and how to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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Beyond the talks, the day was filled with team-building activities that brought everyone together — including tug of war, water games, music and dance, and a powerful Human Rights poem delivered by Buhle, which touched hearts and reminded us of the struggles and progress of human rights movements around the world.

International guests joined us from the USA, Australia, Canada and other global countries , making the event truly global in spirit.

A special thank you to K-One SA for their electrifying performance that brought the house down and left our students buzzing with energy.



This was more than just an event, it was a celebration of freedom, youth voice, and shared humanity, and a beautiful reminder that at Opal students, we empower not only the mind but also the soul.



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Orientation Days – Welcoming Students of 2025

We welcomed new Opal residents with two incredible Orientation Days, on 10 May at Naturena Apartments and 17 May at Primula House.

These days were designed to introduce students to the Opal students lifestyle, leadership, and foundation values. With special appearances from sponsors such as FNB, students received informative talks about finances, student wellness, and residence rules and responsibilities.

Miss Opal students 2024, Precious Maroga, gave a heartfelt welcome, sharing what it truly means to be part of the Opal family. A place where students are seen, heard, and celebrated.

As a warm gesture, students also received Opal-branded goodies, including bar soaps, condoms, and other essential items, reaffirming that at Opal students, we don't just provide a place to stay, we foster a safe, clean, and caring environment where students can thrive.





ORIENTATION DAY

LIVE LEARN CONNECT

WELCOME
PAL STUDENTS
RESIDENCE



2025
17 MAY
09:00-13:00



OPAL STUDENTS PRIMULA HOUSE
479 LEYDS STREET
SUNNYSIDE
PRETORIA

ORIENTATION

FREE SNACKS & FUN ACTIVITIES



OPAL STUDENTS WELCOME PACKS TO BE RECEIVED
FINANCIAL LITERACY
FACILITY INTRODUCTIONS
LEARN ABOUT STUDENT LIFE
WORKSHOPS ON TIME MANAGEMENT & STUDY TIPS



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Opal Students Annual Sports Tournament – 1st Leg Highlights | Hosted at Naturena Apartments & Naturena Primary School

The excitement was electric as we officially kicked off the 1st leg of the annual Opal Students Sports Tournament at Naturena Apartments, with matches held at Naturena Primary School. The atmosphere was filled with energy, school spirit, and fierce competition as all eyes were on the defending champions — and what an unexpected turn of events we witnessed!

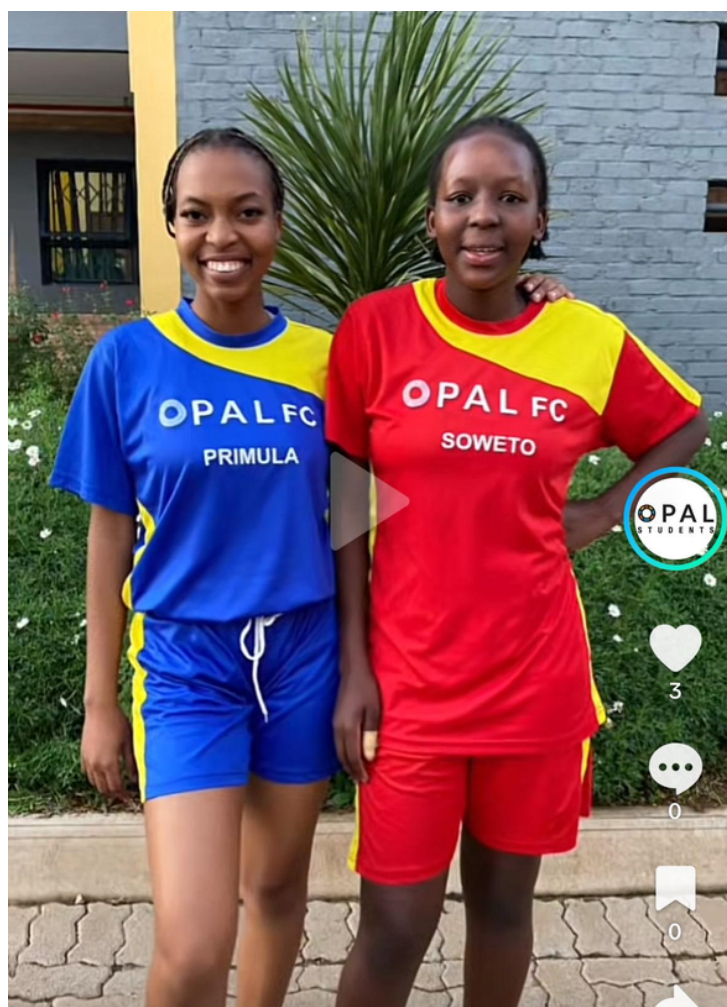
In the soccer showdown, the two-time defending champions, Naturena, suffered a surprising defeat against a well-coordinated and determined Primula House soccer team, marking one of the tournament's most talked-about upsets so far. Meanwhile, the netball court served its own dose of drama as Primula House, the reigning netball champions, fell to a resilient and sharp Naturena netball team, who were clearly out to make a statement this season.



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We also welcomed a historic moment in Opal sports history — the debut of the Ladies Soccer 5-a-side match. The newly formed Primula House ladies soccer team faced off against their Naturena counterparts in a fast-paced, thrilling match. Naturena came out on top, but both teams showed great promise, teamwork, and fighting spirit that left spectators excited for what's to come..



With the first leg wrapped up and each team hungry for redemption or continued glory, all roads now lead to Primula House for the second leg of the tournament. We can't wait to see our teams come back stronger, more united, and ready to battle it out for the crown.

Let the games continue!

Written By: Precious Maroga

Opal Good Luck Initiative – Because We Care



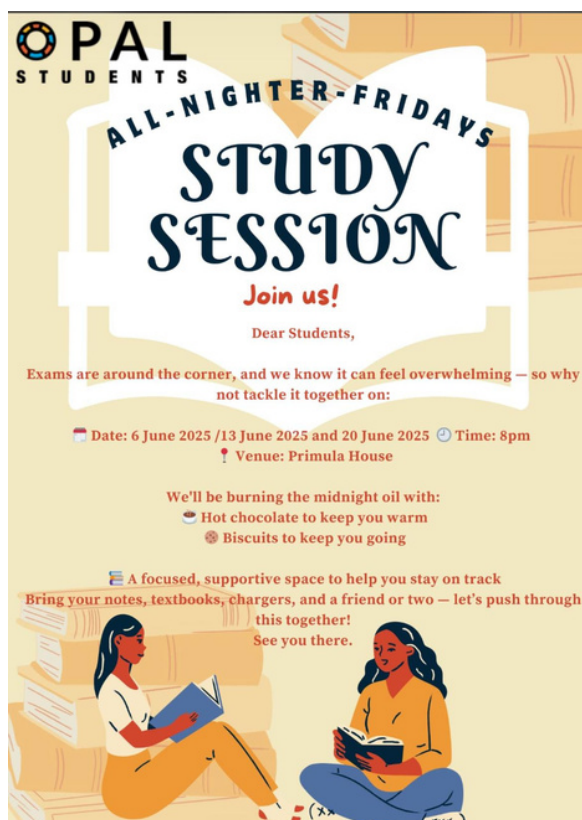
These packs symbolized Opal's unwavering belief in our students' potential and our commitment to walking beside them every step of the way. To help students stay alert and energized during long study sessions, energy drinks were also provided courtesy of Red Bull at Primula House, while Naturena students received refreshing Coca-Cola, courtesy of Coca-Cola South Africa. These extra touches gave our students the boost they needed to tackle late nights, early mornings, and back-to-back revision sessions with confidence.

As exams approached, Opal Students launched the Opal students Good Luck Initiative — a thoughtful campaign designed to uplift and motivate students during one of the most intense and stressful periods of the academic year. Each student received a study pack from our dedicated Student Life Coordinator, Mrs. Lolo Phala, which included Opal students-branded pens and pencils — a small but meaningful gesture to remind our students that they are never alone on their academic journey.



Written By: Precious Maroga

Opal students Study Sessions – Fueling Success Through All-Nighters



As the pressure of June exams set in, Opal Students introduced a dedicated academic support space through our Friday Night Study Sessions, which kicked off on 6 June. These all-night marathons provided students with a calm, focused, and collaborative environment to revise, complete assignments, and prepare thoroughly for their exams. At Opal, we believe in investing in our students' futures and are deeply committed to fostering a culture of academic excellence.

At Opal students, we believe in our students' futures and we're committed to fostering a culture of academic excellence.

To keep everyone energized and motivated through the night, students were provided with coffee, hot chocolate, and biscuits. All they had to bring was their study material, determination, and a willingness to push through the night. These sessions weren't just about studying; they were a testament to the power of community, discipline, and the unwavering support Opal offers its residents.



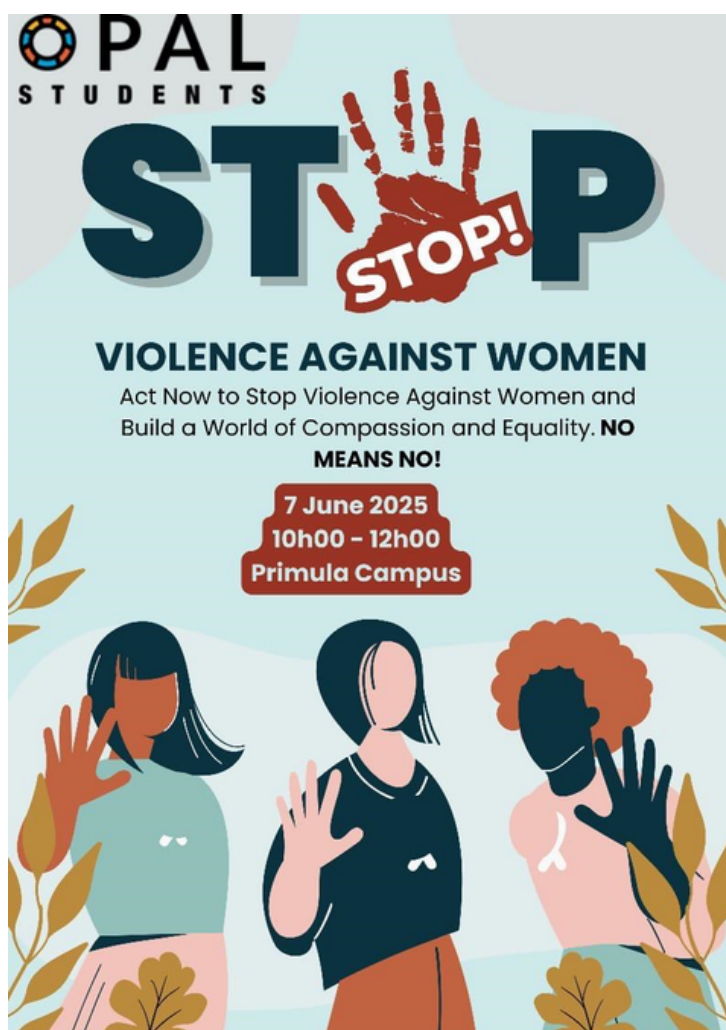
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“No Means No” Workshop – Empowering Our Girls

One of the most important workshops held this year was the “No Means No” session, led by our student life assistant, Nosiphelo. This workshop was tailored specifically for our Opal Students ladies, focusing on self-empowerment, confidence, and the meaning of consent.

Participants learned practical communication strategies for asserting their boundaries, engaged in self-defense demonstrations, and explored the emotional importance of knowing that “No” is a complete sentence. The session sparked deep reflections, and many walked away feeling more confident and equipped to navigate unsafe or uncomfortable situations.

At Opal students, we stand firmly against the abuse of women and girls, and this workshop embodied that commitment beautifully.



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SAPIN Financial Literacy & Property Investment Workshop | 28 June 2025

In a groundbreaking collaboration, Opal Students joined forces with SAPIN Youth, ABSA, BSA Law, Xpello, and Lightstone to host a full-day Financial Literacy and Property Investment Workshop at the iconic Soweto Theatre. This transformative event brought together industry leaders and aspiring young professionals for a day of insight, empowerment, and education.

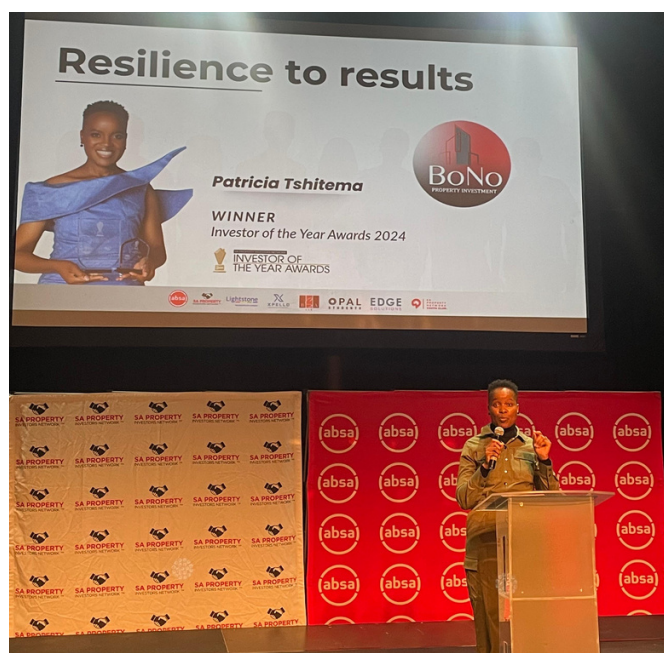
The workshop was headlined by financial and entrepreneurial powerhouses including Patricia Tshitema, Ben Malapile, Michelins De Benedictis, Karin Mallétt, Percy Madiba, and Tshepo Mashashane, who delivered powerful messages on budgeting, real estate, investing, and building generational wealth.



A standout moment of the day was the highly engaging interactive session, where attendees had the opportunity to ask questions directly to the panelists, opening up meaningful conversations and personalized advice.

Patricia Tshitema, a celebrated entrepreneur, founder of the Opal Students Foundation, and Investor of the Year 2024 recipient, delivered an inspiring session that resonated deeply with attendees, particularly Opal students striving to take control of their financial futures.

Written By: Precious Maroga



Adding to the energy of the day, attendees received goody bags courtesy of ABSA Home Loans, one of the proud event sponsors. Among the many standout participants was Precious Maroga, who received a special gift — a set of headphones from ABSA, in recognition of her active engagement and thoughtful contributions during the Q&A session.

With sincere gratitude, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all our sponsors and collaborators — ABSA, SAPIN Youth, BSA Law, Xpello, and Lightstone and CJ Students, whose generous support and commitment to youth empowerment made this event possible.

Not only did Opal students attend in full force, but the Opal students Foundation also sponsored ten youth from outside the residence to join the workshop, ensuring broader access to these valuable lessons. It was a day defined by growth, connection, and the belief that financial empowerment is not just a dream, it's a journey that starts with knowledge and community.



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CELEBRATIONS

We're thrilled to share that Opal Students has officially surpassed 500,000 views on TikTok! 🎉 This exciting milestone reflects the energy, creativity, and unity of our vibrant community. From fun trends and behind-the-scenes moments to event highlights and student life content, your support has helped us amplify the Opal experience far beyond our residences. Thank you for every like, share, and comment, this moment belongs to all of us. Let's keep the momentum going as we continue to showcase what it means to be part of the Opal family!

Looking Ahead & Final Reflections

Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars!

Here's what's still to come in 2025 — and we can't wait to share it with you:

- **Opal Students 10K Fun Walk/Hike** – A refreshing blend of fitness and fun with your fellow residents.
- **Mr & Miss Opal Students 2025: The Grand Finale** – Witness elegance, talent, and leadership shine on stage!
- **Opal Gala Dinner & Awards Ceremony** – Celebrate our achievements in style. A night of glamour, gratitude, and recognition.

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Message of Gratitude from the Writer – Precious Maroga

As the writer and fellow Opal student, I want to thank each and every one of you who made these stories worth telling. Whether you attended an event, led a project, or simply showed up for a friend, you've added something special to our shared experience. This newsletter is a reflection of the heart we put into everything at Opal. Thank you for being part of this family, for inspiring leadership, and for reminding me that storytelling is most powerful when it comes from the community it represents.

Here's to many more moments, milestones, and memories.

With appreciation,

Precious Maroga

Miss Opal Students 2024 💜

