

I would not be who I am without the experience of being a South African raised through the period of Apartheid's demise: I accrued the benefits of a white child under apartheid (comparative safety, material comfort and privileged education) and the benefits of freedom as an adult (not being conscripted into the army, a free and lively academy and public sphere, equality, freedom of association and expression). As a South African I am acutely aware of the cumulative implications of my lived, and inherited, past, and as, a white middle-class South African, am equally aware of my status as a beneficiary of colonialism and apartheid.

My life has tracked and been marked by the transition to democracy in South Africa: I was born in 1976, the year of the Soweto riots, and the popularisation of mass opposition to apartheid. I began my schooling in 1982 through the years of economic and social crisis. In 1990 I began high school; a month later FW de Klerk un-banned liberation organisations, committed the government to releasing political prisoners, made provision for the return of political exiles and dedicated the apartheid government to negotiating a democratic future; at the same time the country experienced an unprecedented wave of political violence. Yet political negotiations remained on track and in my final year of school South Africans went to the polls in a universal franchise to elect and inaugurate a legitimate and democratic government. In 1995, having enjoyed a "gap year", I enrolled in at the University of Cape Town majoring in Political Studies and Economics. The following year the final constitution was adopted and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began its work.

Contingent to these realities has been a significant public and policy debate about the trajectory of our social, political and economic transition, the costs and benefits of our current developmental path, and a constant imagining of policy and political alternatives in juxtaposition to contemporary realities. I have always been fascinated by the struggles and debates implicit in this South African reality, and as a working adult, by the opportunities for change thrown up at the interstices of society and the practice of politics and policy.

In applying to the Kennedy School, to pursue an MPP, I aim to complement and deepen my political, economic policy, and analytical skills to enhance my capacity for contributing to a more just, equitable, democratic and sustainable future for my continent, country and her people.

In my nascent career I have had the opportunity to work in formal party politics, and for two non-governmental organizations. IDASA has provided me with an opportunity to participate directly in, and comment on, policy and political debates, and I have become a regular commentator on political events to print, radio and television media, and an opinion page contributor to a number of South African newspapers.

As the lived experience of apartheid recedes ever further into our collective past, and the political imperatives of the early transition – reconciliation, institutional stability, and entrenching the peace – give way to a close focus on the legacy of apartheid – poverty, inequality and social justice – the ability to formulate policy, and to critique existing government interventions will play an increasingly prominent role. An attendant risk is that policy debates remain the preserve of technocratic elites, alienating and marginalizing the very citizens they claim in their name.

The MPP is aimed at individuals actively working in the public sphere, who want to continue to contribute to their societies in meaningful and applied ways. The nature of the programmes and the synthesis therein of both political science and economics, with a clear bias towards practical implementation is an ideal pedagogical programme. I believe that such a programme will enable me to contribute systematically in the areas of policy formulation, monitoring, and analysis, while lobbying for the popularization of policy instruments. As a proud South African, and African, with applied developmental and political experience, I believe I would moreover contribute to deepening the learning experience of the collective of scholars.

A robust, critical ally, in the form of open public debate and participation is crucial to entrenching a truly democratic edifice in this country. Consequently I hope to continue to be able to contribute well-researched opinion and analysis in South African civil society. My ambition is to develop an institution that fuses the imperatives of knowledge development with civic education and practical initiatives to encourage active citizenship and agency in deepening democracy.