

[View this email in your browser](#)



In mid-March, the 10th Gender Equity, Wellness and Leadership (GEWAL) engagement was hosted by the Motsepe Foundation. What stood out most profoundly was that the conversation did not begin with strategy, policy or statistics, but rather with lived experience. It was a reminder that the most meaningful reflections on leadership are often grounded in the journeys we have walked, the systems we have navigated and the responsibilities we carry as we rise within them.

It made me think, “what should my theme for the year be?” and what I’ve come up with is: **#WideningTheBrokenRung**. The broken rung is not simply a metaphor; it is a structural reality that continues to shape the progression of women and black professionals. Many of us are navigating systems that were not originally designed with our inclusion in mind, and this has profound implications for how we experience leadership, opportunity and power.

This article is my reflection of the conversations that were had during the GEWAL and how they have manifested in our profession.

A recurring theme throughout the engagement was the importance of **owning one’s power**. For many, stepping into positions of influence can feel unfamiliar, and at times

validation. It requires a deliberate acceptance of responsibility, the confidence to make decisions without waiting for permission, and the humility to acknowledge and correct mistakes when they arise. In this context, owning power is not about dominance, but about stewardship and understanding that the position you hold carries both authority and obligation.

The conversation moved beyond representation, towards the notion of **meaningful influence**. While there has been progress in increasing female representation in leadership structures, it was emphasised that representation alone is insufficient if it does not translate into the ability to shape outcomes. Research and lived experience both suggest that a critical mass, often cited as at least 30%, is required before diversity begins to meaningfully influence decision-making. Without this threshold, there is a risk that individuals remain present but not impactful, visible but not heard.

Equally important was the recognition that progress, by itself, is not self-sustaining. There are indeed pockets of success where women have gained ground in leadership, but these gains require active maintenance. This includes the willingness to advocate for others in rooms where they are not present, to challenge inequities even when it is uncomfortable, and importantly, to hold one another accountable. Gender equity is not advanced through passive alignment, but through intentional and sometimes difficult conversations.

One of the more personal reflections that resonated with me was the idea of being “**somebody’s somebody**” becoming the person that others can look to as a representation of what is possible. Leadership, in this sense, is not defined solely by individual achievement, but by the pathways we create for others. This requires intentional investment in mentorship and sponsorship, as well as the discernment to ensure that the relationships we engage in genuinely support our growth. It also requires acknowledging that leadership is not sustained in isolation; support systems at both a professional and personal level play a critical role in enabling individuals to thrive.

The discussion highlighted the importance of **access** as a fundamental enabler of equity. While actuarial talent is widely available, opportunity is not. There remain clear gaps in access to financial literacy, stable infrastructure such as internet connectivity and even the time required to invest in personal development without guilt. Addressing these gaps does not always require complex solutions, in many cases, it requires intentional design and a willingness to address structural deficiencies that have long been accepted as immovable.

favour of a more realistic understanding of **work-life integration**, acknowledging that competing priorities must be actively managed rather than perfectly balanced. At any given moment, individuals may need to prioritise one area over another, and this requires clarity, discipline and self-awareness. It also requires a healthier relationship with failure, recognising that setbacks are an inevitable part of growth and that resilience is not about continuously taking on more, but about knowing when to pause, recalibrate and refocus.

In the context of wellbeing, it was particularly striking to reflect on how often high-performing individuals normalise burnout. The fact that burnout is now formally recognised as a medical condition serves as a stark reminder that sustainability must be actively managed. True resilience lies not in overextension, but in intentionality; in making deliberate choices about where energy is invested, and in ensuring that growth extends beyond professional achievement into personal development and fulfilment.

Looking ahead, the discussion also touched on the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in shaping the future of work and leadership. While AI is often positioned as a disruptive force, the more important consideration is who is designing and building these systems. If the same structural exclusions persist in these spaces, there is a risk that existing inequalities will be amplified rather than resolved. This raises an important question for our profession and for leadership more broadly: “are we positioning ourselves to participate in shaping the future of AI or are we passively adapting to it?”.

Ultimately, one of the most powerful takeaways from the engagement was the mindset of being **constructively discontent while remaining unafraid to fail**. Progress requires a level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, but it must be coupled with the courage to act despite uncertainty. The path to leadership is rarely linear, and there are seldom predefined routes to follow. Instead, individuals must navigate evolving challenges, remain anchored to their objectives and trust that the necessary guidance and support will emerge along the way.

As we reflect on the insights from GEWAL, the question becomes one of action. How are we, in our respective roles, contributing to widening the broken rung? Are we creating access where it does not exist, advocating for those who are not present and designing systems that are reflective of the diverse society we operate within? Are we intentional about the impact we have, not only in terms of outcomes, but in terms of the opportunities we create for others and ourselves?

requires us to move beyond individual success and towards collective progress, recognising that the true measure of leadership lies not only in what we achieve, but in what we enable for others.

Bridging the Gap: A Note from the Head of Vacation Work

Vacation work is more than a line on a CV; it is the first real handshake between a student and their career. As I finalise the administrative setup for this year's cycle, I am inviting new employers to step forward.

We are currently updating our database and will be reaching out to our partners very soon. If your firm isn't yet part of the ASABA network, we'd love to have you. Let's work together to provide the next generation of professionals with the practical experience they need to thrive.



Copyright (C) 2026 ASABA. All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)