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“Bra Jacky” Motlogeloa

**Young,  
Gifted  
& Black**

Thoriso Maloka

Bella Mfenyana

Molebogeng Maswabi

**Tebogo Mogashoa**

Entrepreneur with a passion  
for the *biodiversity economy*

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# Young, Gifted & Black

Bella Mfenyana



# Come in and cozy up

## In conversation with Bella Mfenyana, the founder of the award-winning Neatela Property, Lifestyle & Consulting Company

**A**fter years of pursuing a career in the corporate world, Bella Mfenyana finally found her passion in the hospitality, services, and consulting space. She is now welcoming guests to the many establishments in her property portfolio. She holds a bachelor of commerce, master's in business administration (MBA), and qualifications through several continuous development programmes, including a property development programme. Bella is a seasoned leader in both public and private sector financial services. With over two decades in the health and financial management industries, her experience includes the notably successful establishment and leadership of the Scheme's Contracts and Operations Division at the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS).



*Bella Mfenyana*

Bella's entrepreneurial spirit has afforded her the executive position of being able to combine all her strengths and passion to create a diverse business offering across three pillars: property, lifestyle, and consulting. As a conscientious visionary with high energy and drive, Bella is the ideal partner to her clients. Neatela manages a portfolio of luxury self-catering, serviced apartments in six major centers of South Africa: Cape Town, Johannesburg, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth), Durban, Pretoria, and East London, and a national network through its partners. Neatela proudly observes extensive health and safety protocols within its properties to ensure the safety of all guests and staff. Added benefits that guests can enjoy include concierge services, free parking, high-speed WiFi, and daily housekeeping.

### All about short-term rental

Short-term rentals, or vacation rentals, commonly and incorrectly known as 'Airbnb' are furnished and fully equipped properties that

are rented out for a shorter period to guests. How short is undefined and inconsistently applied. Owners or property managers lease their properties out on a nightly or weekly basis. Short-term rentals have become more popular in the last few years due to many reasons, but mostly because of the costs, privacy, and the space they offer. They provide people with a way to move as they'd like or see various parts of the world at a fraction of the price. If you have a second home, you can work closely with a short-term rental property management company to help you run and advertise your business or better yet, utilise applications to manage it remotely.

### Neatela properties, lifestyle, and consulting

The name Neatela comes from the isiXhosa word 'uku nyathela', which means 'to take a step, a step forward'. Neatela deals with property management and growing Bella's property

portfolio in the residential space, which houses just under 200 managed properties. The properties are situated in specific areas of the six major identified centers. In Cape Town, they have properties in Century City and the CBD area, Gqeberha, East London, Johannesburg North, and Durban North. The whole purpose of short-term rental is to encourage the freedom of staying in a place where you can do what you want to do, from cooking your preferred meal to having space and privacy, as well as waking up on your own time.

The second focus area for Neatela is lifestyle, a one-stop, concierge approach and the Neatela Lifestyle ethos is to understand clients' needs, and tailor-make and source solutions that suit, in a timely and professional manner. Neatela provides seamless lifestyle orientated services across South Africa. Services include, but are not limited to; private transportation, events management, product sourcing, logistics management, interior decor, and project management. The last focus area is consulting, providing innovative solutions to deliver strategic corporate strategies and operational designs including procurement strategies, CSI budget management, project management, and implementation through its experts and partners. Neatela supports businesses in developing more effective methods in procurement and supply chain to ensure a robust governance and management structure.

The properties under the Neatela portfolio are partly owned by the founder, while others are privately owned. Neatela renders the management services. The model applied is that of getting corporates to know about the establishments and use them for business travel, however, leisure travelers do make use of the properties through booking platforms and travel agencies. The benefits of using short-term rentals, especially during the pandemic, are that a guest has private space and there is less contact with other people, as compared to the hotels where it can get overcrowded, especially

at common spaces. Driven by her ethos of accessibility, security, and freedom for persons living in South Africa—and promoting the continent at large, the properties are virtually managed using advanced technology such as access to the property, noise levels, and an electricity monitor.

On mentoring others, Bella assisted her helper to acquire her very first property, by teaching her how to be disciplined with money and the importance of letting go of unwarranted financial commitments. She raised her funds through unit trust investments each month. The most fulfilling part for Bella as a mentor was to see her helper happy to be a property owner, something she never thought she would be able to achieve. She also assists fellow property owners in short-term rental by setting up property management systems for them to use for the day-to-day running of the properties, using technology that is available to reduce the burden of managing the property, and this is done virtually. She also inducts and empowers other owners by setting a standard for the look and completes renovations for them. Following that, they use apps to manage their properties, ranging from geyser monitoring apps and maintenance network teams to cleaners, noise detectors, instant payment links, and door locking systems. Once she has set up the necessary systems, she hands over the property to some owners for management.

Her driving force to becoming a property management and hospitality entrepreneur was driven by her passion for travel. “I was raised by entrepreneurs. Both of my parents retired early



from their professions to pursue businesses in farming and other interests. I always knew that one day I would become an entrepreneur because my parents were. Secondly, my father always told me to not be dependent on a job, because I could lose it at any time,” Bella says.

“As a young black female, the secret to attaining what I have attained so far was purely through hard work. However, there have been challenges which include industry discrimination, non-responsiveness to proposals by counterparts, and disrupted cash flow due to the pandemic. My greatest fear in the space that I operate is damage to property, theft, and the fact that this is a highly pressured space, but knowing that it will always pay off helps me manage my fears. The ups and downs of the business include negatively affected cash flow, however, I feel blessed that there has not been a major downtime.

”The most satisfying moment for me in business is putting a smile on people’s faces. Seeing other people grow, mentoring them, empowering other people, earning a living and doing it in a fun way, and supporting small businesses. If I had a magic wand, I would ensure that this industry is formally recognised by the Department of Tourism to better understand the short-term rental business, improve access to finance, and allow them to be graded. Currently, there are no specific short-term rental regulations in South Africa, except for the Rental Housing Act 50 of 1999, which regulates the relationship between landlords and tenants within South Africa and the Community Schemes Ombud Service (CSOS) Act, 2011 Act 9 of 2011.”

The low presence and poor responsiveness of CSOS has resulted in trustees and bullying owners imposing rules that do not support the investor or minority side of the short-term rental in sectional title communities by limiting the movement of people, refusing short-term rentals to operate, and discriminating on access into the complex—all which point to frustrating certain owner type groupings and engraining that only those who do not need the income own in certain complexes and set beneficial rules.

The need for compliance management against the Act would definitely benefit the residential property industry and give entry to new groupings. This can be done by simply attending AGMs, timeous responses to queries and complaints, and holding trustees accountable for poor governance and labour practices. This needs attention.

“My ethos is accessibility, security, and freedom for persons living in South Africa and promoting the continent at large,” Bella concludes. ▲

