

Mimi Kalinda



By [Louise Marsland](#)

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As a former MTV and Channel O presenter and filmmaker with renowned Hollywood director, Spike Lee, FleishmanHillard's latest key appointment, Mimi Kalinda, brings a wealth of media and communications experience to her new position of Director: African Lead for the global communications consultancy.

Kalinda's appointment signals a strong push by the group to provide integrated communications strategies for its clients across Africa. Kalinda speaks six languages and while she grew up in South Africa, her parents hail from Rwanda and the DRC where she was born, giving her a unique personal perspective to the continent.

While she has had a high profile, eclectic career across media, she returned to South Africa four years ago and comes to FleishmanHillard from Weber Shandwick.

In addition to her role in relationship building and business development, Kalinda will also oversee the gathering of market intelligence, servicing pan-African business, and the development of an Africa strategy with the intention to creating a deeper FleishmanHillard network on the continent.

Commented FleishmanHillard SA managing director, Kevin Welman: "Mimi's appointment is indicative of how critical pan-African relations are to us. Increasingly we are seeing our clients expressing considerable interest in engaging audiences across the continent. This is a key growth area for the agency."

Kalinda says a big part of her remit is to put together an African strategy for the group.

"I manage the firm's engagement with, and support of, affiliates in the region. I also identify and develop partnerships in new markets across Africa, engaging stakeholders and influencers with a focus on business development and strategic account management."

She has wanted to contribute meaningfully through business in Africa and before returning to South Africa, she moved back to Congo and started a couple of media properties, focusing on using music and soap operas to address societal issues and create behavioural change programmes.

"What I'm doing now brings together everything I've always done and loved to do in my life. I have always been a huge proponent of learning different cultures and communicating, using all my languages."

And yes, of course she has a favourite story from her time with director Spike Lee - when she became tongue-tied at

meeting her idol, Denzel Washington, when he asked her for a cup of coffee!



ABOUT MIMI KALINDA

Mimi Kalinda was based in New York City between 2003 and 2006 as a content producer and filmmaker with director Spike Lee's production company. She is also recognised as the first African woman to host a show on MTV in 2000, based in London, after becoming one of the first presenters when Channel O launched. Previously with Weber Shandwick, she was responsible for leading key pan-African development projects and social impact accounts that include the Innovation Prize for Africa and the Michael and Susan Dell foundation. Kalinda has led content creation for the African Union's CAADP framework and Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture. She is a graduate of New York University.

Q: What does this position mean to you?

A: This position means that I can play a role in growing the public relations industry in Africa, creating robust, diverse networks of people who are passionate about the industry, bringing them together to provide excellent client support in-country, and also set up training and skills-sharing incentives that will allow public relations practitioners in various African countries to learn best practices and rise to the top of their profession.

Q: What is your main business challenge?

A: Limited infrastructure and capacity-building in many African countries.

Q: Most important attribute needed to do your job?

A: Confidence.

Q: How will you make an impact?

A: By creating a network of partners across the continent who share our vision and commitment to excellent client service, by raising public relations standards in Africa to meet international standards through the work we implement in-country, by educating all our stakeholders (internal and external) on the very tangible opportunities Africa offers.

Q: Proudest achievement to date?

A: My children, being able to speak numerous languages, living in six countries on different continents and surviving it all!

Q: What are you currently reading for work?

A: 'Africa Rising' by Vijay Mahajan.

Q: Your life philosophy?

A: Do your very best every time and in everything; then let it go and let the universe do the rest.

Q: What do you still hope to achieve?

A: I would love to say I have travelled to every single country in Africa.

Q: What do you do for fun?

A: I have singing and dancing competitions with my children, I love to read, cook, and go on road trips with my family.

Q: At the top of my 'bucket list' is...

A: Learn to speak pidgin properly and speak at the commencement ceremony at my alma mater, New York University.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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