

Why I want to go to space camp?

Growing up in a village called Boschfontein in South Africa, my dream has always been to become an astronomer. Even though I had never met an astronomer and my parents thought my dream was unrealistic, I kept it and took steps towards achieving it.

I love stargazing and it is a way for me to connect with the universe. When I was young, I did not know how to connect the different stars into constellations but had always loved the Swazi myths that my grandfather used to tell. Now that I know the science it awes me even more that in the dark skies I can see planets and other galaxies. Even though I do not have a big telescope, the star maps that I get every month are helpful for navigating at night.

Going to space camp will be a dream come true because it is very rare and almost impossible for a village girl like me to ever meet astronomers and scientists. And almost every child in my village dreams of becoming a doctor or teacher and they have met their mentors, but I have not. This opportunity will make it possible for me to meet astronomers and other teenagers who share the same passion I have.

I was selected to be part of a program called Imagine Scholar. This program has helped me to realize my potential and share my passions with others. At the end of every month, I hold workshops to teach young children about astronomy. I pray and hope that they get inspired about astronomy and other sciences because most of the youth in my village do not have dreams. And those having dreams, they do not become realized because of being destitute and not having people to inspire them. Imagine Scholar has also found me a sponsor to cover my flight to Washington DC if I am selected.

Getting this opportunity will impact my life positively. Because I refuse to be like the other people in my village, I do not want my dream to be deferred. Through this opportunity I will be able to hold more astronomy workshops for young children in my neighborhood because I believe that it is my duty to help them realize what they really want to be. And it is my responsibility to help and guide them through, because most people in my village think that such dreams are not for young black girls.

After grade 12, I am going to study astrophysics in the University of Cape Town and hopefully work in the Square Kilometer Array project. I've worked hard to make sure I have the marks to get in, but I will need all the inspiration I can get. I truly believe that this opportunity will help me get inspired and realize my dreams. It will help me become a young woman everyone can be proud of and it will help me change the community I live at. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wendy Nkosi