

The Feature.Za

May 2025 Magazine

The Shape of Women

What This Means
Beyond Your Body



*Catching
up with*
Karabo Taole
Makhosi
Msimango

The Digital World What Women Face



*Mother
hood*

You Need Not
Suffer In
Silence

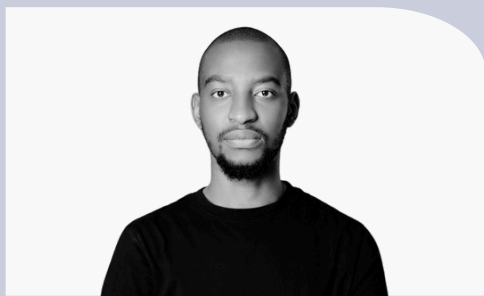
Ntsoaki Ledimo

Cancer Activist and Survivor

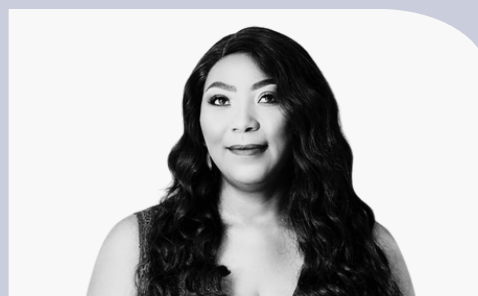


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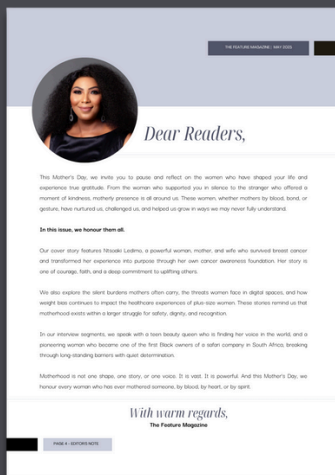
Navigating The Issue

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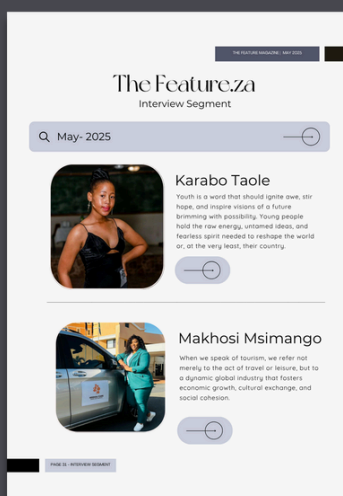
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Dear Readers,

This Mother's Day, we invite you to pause and reflect on the women who have shaped your life and experience true gratitude. From the woman who supported you in silence to the stranger who offered a moment of kindness, motherly presence is all around us. These women, whether mothers by blood, bond, or gesture, have nurtured us, challenged us, and helped us grow in ways we may never fully understand.

In this issue, we honour them all.

Our cover story features Ntsoaki Ledimo, a powerful woman, mother, and wife who survived breast cancer and transformed her experience into purpose through her own cancer awareness foundation. Her story is one of courage, faith, and a deep commitment to uplifting others.

We also explore the silent burdens mothers often carry, the threats women face in digital spaces, and how weight bias continues to impact the healthcare experiences of plus-size women. These stories remind us that motherhood exists within a larger struggle for safety, dignity, and recognition.

In our interview segments, we speak with a teen beauty queen who is finding her voice in the world, and a pioneering woman who became one of the first Black owners of a safari company in South Africa, breaking through long-standing barriers with quiet determination.

Motherhood is not one shape, one story, or one voice. It is vast. It is powerful. And this Mother's Day, we honour every woman who has ever mothered someone, by blood, by heart, or by spirit.

With warm regards,

The Feature Magazine



*It's Not Blood That
Makes a Mother — It's
Love.*



*Motherhood Is a Role,
Not a Requirement*



MOTHERHOOD

YOU NEED NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE

From the moment of conception, motherhood is romanticised as a sacred and joyous experience, filled with glowing skin, instinctual bonding and maternal bliss. The reality, however, is far more complex and for many, quietly painful. From the first trimester to the regular OBGYN visits, from sleepless nights to the ever-expanding emotional labour of raising a child, motherhood is a journey that demands more than it is often acknowledged for. It is meant to be grounded in love, support and empathy, yet all too often it becomes a performance carefully staged in holiday photos, birthday parties and filtered Instagram stories.

Mothers are typically seen as the unshakable pillars of their families, the emotional centre around which everyone else orbits. This narrative, while flattering, can be dangerously isolating. Neurological research shows that a mother's brain undergoes significant changes during pregnancy, preparing her to prioritise the needs of her child. Yet this biological devotion is often exploited, with little regard for how deeply it affects the woman's identity, wellbeing and mental health. Society applauds the selflessness of mothers but rarely pauses to ask who is caring for them. Who sees the woman behind the mother?

Behind every carefully curated family portrait is a story that may involve anxiety, postpartum depression, loneliness or exhaustion, burdens silently carried because mothers are expected to be strong, grateful and tireless. They are rarely given permission to speak their truths without being judged, dismissed or told to enjoy every moment. In many cases, mothers are not only suffering in silence, they are being silenced. When motherhood becomes a performance, it leaves little room for authenticity, healing or vulnerability. In a world that insists on idealising mothers, the greatest act of resistance may be allowing them to be fully human.

Motherhood begins with transformation and often, that transformation starts with pain. Pregnancy stretches the body in unimaginable ways. Organs are displaced. Bones may shift. Hormones surge and crash. The birthing process, whether vaginal or surgical, is a trauma the body must recover from. Yet once the baby arrives, the focus almost entirely shifts. The mother becomes secondary. Her pain, her healing, her exhaustion all fade into the background of coos, cuddles and congratulatory messages.

Postpartum care is astonishingly insufficient. Many women receive more attention during pregnancy than after giving birth. The six-week postpartum check-up barely scratches the surface of what a woman goes through physically and emotionally. Persistent bleeding, pelvic pain, torn muscles, incontinence and sleep deprivation are normalised, even dismissed. Women are told to endure, to bounce back, to smile through the discomfort, as if suffering is a rite of passage that must be silently endured.

There is also the matter of identity loss. The woman who existed before the baby often disappears. Her body is no longer hers. It is a feeding vessel, a comfort zone, a pillow, a jungle gym. Any discomfort or bodily change is expected to be tolerated with grace. If she dares to express dissatisfaction or pain, she risks being labelled as ungrateful or weak. As though wanting relief from suffering is a betrayal of motherhood.

Further complicating this is the lack of structural support. In many parts of the world, maternity leave is limited or unpaid. There is minimal access to pelvic floor therapy, postpartum counselling or even honest conversations about what the body goes through. The burden of physical healing falls squarely on her shoulders, often while she is also expected to care for a newborn around the clock. What mothers need is not just celebration after birth but care. They need space to heal, time to rest and the freedom to acknowledge that their bodies have endured something monumental. Silence should not be the standard. Endurance should not be mistaken for strength. Mothers deserve more than survival. They deserve recovery.

Beyond diapers and school runs lies a realm of invisible work: emotional labour. Mothers are the emotional anchors of their households. They remember the appointments, soothe the fears, plan the meals, keep tabs on everyone's moods and often sacrifice their own peace to maintain the family's emotional well-being. This work, though unseen, is exhausting. It drains. It depletes. And yet, it is rarely acknowledged, let alone shared.

From the moment the child is born, the mother becomes the default. She is expected to know what the child needs before the child does. She anticipates, mediates and adjusts constantly. She is the one who smooths over conflicts, who ensures birthdays are remembered, who keeps everyone's world spinning without asking for applause. If she falters, the system collapses, yet her contributions are seen as natural, not extraordinary. What makes emotional labour even more painful is its thanklessness. There is no paycheck. No awards. No metrics of success. Only burnout. And the expectation to do it all again tomorrow. For many mothers, this leads to resentment not because they do not love their families, but because they are running on empty. The love becomes entangled with fatigue and the guilt of not feeling joyous compounds the burden.



Society reinforces this cycle by idealising the self-sacrificing mother. Media tells her that good mothers give without question. That love means forgetting yourself. That fulfilment is found in service. And so she gives until there is nothing left. Even when she asks for help, it is often seen as a weakness, as if a competent mother would never need support. To break this cycle, we must recognise emotional labour for what it is: real work. It should be shared, respected and compensated in ways that go beyond words. Mothers should not have to choose between being the backbone of their family and their own mental health. They deserve rest, acknowledgment and most of all, partnership.

The mental health of mothers is a topic often buried under layers of shame and silence. Postpartum depression affects millions, yet few feel safe enough to speak up. Anxiety, intrusive thoughts and even rage are not uncommon in new mothers, but these experiences are rarely given space. Instead, mothers are bombarded with messages about gratitude and bliss, about enjoying every moment, as if the absence of joy implies failure. This stigma isolates mothers at a time when they most need connection. A mother may look perfectly composed on the outside but be internally battling thoughts that terrify her. She may cry in the shower, numb herself with routine or dread the dawn. Yet she smiles for visitors, posts filtered photos and assures everyone she is fine. The performative nature of motherhood silences her deepest struggles.

There is also the fear of judgment. What if admitting the truth gets her labelled as unstable? What if someone thinks she is unfit to parent? The stakes are high and so she carries the weight alone. Many mothers never seek help, not because they do not need it, but because they are afraid of the consequences. The silence becomes survival yet it is a painful survival, one that can lead to long-term mental health issues.

Olwetha Mokonengane



Healthcare systems also fail to prioritise maternal mental wellness. While postpartum physical checks are minimal, mental health screenings are even rarer. Therapy is expensive. Support groups are few. And in some cultures, mental health is still considered taboo. This leaves mothers with nowhere to turn, validating their belief that their suffering does not matter. What mothers need is a safe space to unravel. To speak. To cry. To not be okay. Maternal mental health must be destigmatised and supported with real resources. Because when a mother is mentally well, the entire family thrives. We must stop punishing mothers for being human.

Motherhood, in the age of social media and hyper-visibility, has become a performance. The pressure to present the perfect family, the perfect child, the perfect self is relentless. From Pinterest-worthy birthday parties to matching family pyjamas, the modern mother is not just raising a child. She is curating an image. And this performance comes at a cost: authenticity.

Every moment becomes a spectacle. Breastfeeding is scrutinised. Discipline is debated. Career choices are judged. No matter what she does, it is never quite right. If she works, she is neglectful. If she stays home, she lacks ambition. If she rests, she is lazy. If she breaks down, she is unstable. There is no room for complexity or contradiction. Just a relentless demand for excellence wrapped in humility.

This performative pressure often leads mothers to hide their struggles. They post smiling selfies while suffering in silence. They cook dinner while feeling hollow. They organise playdates while longing for solitude. And because everyone else seems to be doing fine, they assume they are the only ones failing. The comparison becomes toxic and the bar for motherhood becomes impossibly high.

The truth is perfect motherhood is a myth. There is no universal script. No gold standard. Yet women are taught to believe otherwise and so they pour energy into appearances instead of well-being. They invest in aesthetics while neglecting themselves. And the audience applauds, unaware that the performer is exhausted.

To reclaim motherhood from performance, we must allow mothers to be real. To be messy. To ask for help. To not have all the answers. The most powerful thing we can do is make space for imperfection. Because it is in that space that truth, connection and healing begin.

One of the cruellest paradoxes of motherhood is how surrounded yet isolated a mother can feel. She may be holding a child every moment, answering questions all day or living in a house full of noise yet still feel utterly alone. The social isolation of motherhood is profound. Friendships shift. Priorities change. Time becomes fragmented. And slowly, the woman who once existed begins to fade. Before motherhood, a mother had dreams, hobbies, a name that was hers. After, she becomes “mom”. Her identity is consumed by her role. She no longer has time to write, to dance, to read or even to think. Every moment is measured in service to someone else. And while this is often done out of love, it can also become erasure. Loneliness creeps in quietly. Perhaps friends without children no longer call. Perhaps adult conversation is rare. Perhaps no one asks how she is really doing. And when she does speak of her isolation, she is often met with dismissiveness. But at least you have your child. As if gratitude is meant to replace connection.

Olwetha Mokonengane



*Because 'Mom' Is a Title
Earned, Not Given.*

A full-body portrait of Ntsoaki Ledimo, a woman with a large, voluminous afro hairstyle. She is wearing a matching set of a crop top, high-waisted trousers, and a long, open-front cardigan, all featuring a bold blue and black geometric pattern on a white background. She is also wearing black high-heeled shoes and a silver watch on her left wrist. Her hands are in the pockets of her trousers. The background is a solid light grey.

Ntsoaki Ledimo

Cancer Activist and Survivor

To speak of Ntsoaki Ledimo is to speak of a woman whose presence commands attention—not through force, but through an effortless grace that blends resilience, passion, and an innate understanding of the world around her. She is not easily defined by titles or singular roles with wife and mother being two of them. Instead, she is a force, a mosaic of experiences, lessons, and a deep-rooted belief in the power of transformation. Born in the Free State province and raised in the small town of Welkom, her journey has been anything but predictable. From the warmth of her childhood home, surrounded by the steady love of her parents and siblings, to the vast, unpredictable terrains of the world, she has continuously redefined herself, refusing to be confined by expectations.

As a child, she was deeply connected to her mother, drawn to the quiet lessons embedded in the simplest acts—sharing meals, keeping a home, and serving others with kindness. It was in these early moments that she absorbed the values that would shape her life: discipline, generosity, and the understanding that true fulfillment comes not just from personal achievements, but from the impact one has on others. Her love for cooking was never just about food; it was a language of connection, a way of expressing love without words. Wherever she went, from bustling city streets to quiet villages, she found herself in kitchens, cooking alongside locals, learning their flavors, and making meals that told stories.

But if there is one constant in Ntsoaki's life, it is movement—growth, change, evolution. She was never one to stay confined to a single place or a single dream. Her journey took her far from home, to Bloemfontein, where she laid the foundation for her future, learning not just technical skills but the unspoken rules of survival and reinvention. Yet, even as she navigated different spaces, her vision was never just about personal progress. She was always looking beyond the surface, seeing opportunities where others saw limitations, building connections that would later shape the world around her.



A woman of many layers, Ntsoaki's passion extended beyond her personal interests and into spaces where creativity, culture, and identity thrived. She has a deep appreciation for craftsmanship, heritage, and the ability to tell stories through everyday experiences. Whether through style, mentorship, or the way she curates the spaces she moves in, she carries with her a sense of refined taste and authenticity that remains unmistakable.

Yet, despite the accolades, the recognition, and the undeniable presence she holds, Ntsoaki Ledimo's life has not been without its trials. Loss has shaped her just as much as love has. The passing of her parents, particularly her father's battle with cancer, left a mark on her heart—one that would later guide her into a new phase of her journey. Watching someone she loved struggle, knowing the gaps in healthcare that made the fight even harder, Ntsoaki could not simply move on. She felt a calling to do more, to use her resources and influence to make a difference for others who found themselves in similar battles.

Even in the face of her own challenges, Ntsoaki has never allowed hardship to define her. She has always found a way to transform pain into purpose, to turn grief into action. Whether through philanthropy, mentorship, or her work in supporting young girls and cancer awareness initiatives, she has remained steadfast in her belief that no one should have to struggle alone. She has used her experiences, both joyful and painful, to carve out spaces where others can find hope.

To those who know her, Ntsoaki is more than just an influential woman. She is a nurturer, a visionary, a woman who understands the power of reinvention. Whether she is mentoring, styling, or building something new, she does so with the same passion and dedication she brings to all aspects of her life. She embodies the idea that true success is not just about personal gain but about creating opportunities for others, about lifting as you climb.





In everything she does, Ntsoaki Ledimo leaves behind a legacy—not just of excellence, but of humanity, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to making the world a better place. Hers is a story of movement, of constant evolution, and of an unbreakable spirit that refuses to settle for anything less than greatness. Her story is one that should resonate with all who read it in a way that speaks true to her nature: strength wrapped in delicacy. She harkens her mother as a core part of what she lays her foundation on.

"I was raised by a community builder in my mom, someone that always had people over at our home as if we were hosting events, but it would just be to feed people and create a home for literally everyone. That sense of community is something that was instilled in me from childhood, something I didn't understand then but definitely is a part of who I am today."

From this pivotal moment she soon understood what true entrepreneurship looks like: an experience that leaves a lasting impact on the people who need it most. Although many would look at where she is now and interpret a woman who has had everything opening in the palm of her hand, her journey in the beginning was met with some difficulty.

"When my parents struggled to afford education for all the children, I opted to look for a job. That's where my retail journey began."

Her retail journey and overall independence was only further by working for herself which speaks the truth of the quote: "I got my start by giving myself a start." - Madam C.J. Walker

She soon climbed the ranks of the Foschini Group with her work being awarded with the opportunity to travel overseas, a dream many strive towards.

"This was the first time I left the country, or the continent for that matter. I was obviously just excited to travel and spread my wings but that trip changed my entire life. Working for brands like Alders, Debenhams and Marks & Spencer to mention a few really sharpened my business acumen. I was like a fish out of water but I came out a skilled, focused and goal-oriented executive."

This planted the seed for what she would do herself one day: fashion and lifestyle.

"I think it was always a matter of time before I housed my personal taste and style under one roof. SNL is home to everything Ntsoaki Ledimo from fashion to lifestyle."

For her fashion and lifestyle are more than brands and the perfect Instagram post that allows the world to see how much wealth one carries. Instead, it is a form of self-expression.

"Fashion is much like décor, just personal. And because I have always been about my community, this informs why I love local brands. Fortunately for me, we have some of the most beautiful fashion brands in the world right here at home so it makes my choice easier. I don't just support local because it's local, I also support it because our local fashion brands are very international and world class."

In addition to managing her own fashion and lifestyle brand, her work in retail—particularly with brands like Edcon and Topshop—came with the constant challenge of staying ahead in a rapidly evolving industry. Fashion is unpredictable; what works today might be irrelevant tomorrow, requiring not just creativity but also sharp business acumen. Success demanded that she be both a fashion forecaster and a strategic thinker, always anticipating trends while ensuring business targets were met. The fast-paced nature of retail was both exhilarating and demanding, pushing her to adapt quickly and make decisive moves in an ever-changing market. Her sphere of influence extends past fashion and lifestyle because she refuses to be boxed into a single category when she can soar in instead choosing to diversify herself in hospitality and property "The true magic is love. I absolutely choose the businesses I get into based on my love for them. I absolutely love fashion and style. I love beautiful things like a gorgeous house and I enjoy interior décor and good food. So my business interests and ventures are linked to things I love so that makes balancing everything a bit more manageable. And my last trick is that I get into business with people I like, and that makes the relationships easy to manage and this helps in terms of success and adding value to life."

Her exploits do not end there. Working for brands allowed her to understand what goes into one which lead to her venture with Carol Bouwer through CBNL.

"Carol Bouwer is an inspirational businesswoman who has flourished in many aspects of business from television to entrepreneurship. But at the core of her womanhood is a love for people. I feel it is that common passion for community that really connected us after one of her inspirational platforms, African Odyssey. The inspiration behind the fragrance was to create something for all the women who spread themselves thin for everyone else, to have something that is just theirs. Hence the name is Just Mine, which is also the scent of the perfume, jasmine."



She also owned a restaurant in Rustenburg and was on the judging panel for Miss World South Africa. Her restaurant was a love letter due to her understanding how food can bring people together with the idea forming during lockdown where she delivered food to families in the village. Her time as judge showcased the power of beauty pageants which emphasize beauty with purpose

Although her life is beautiful she has experienced tragedy. However, instead of allowing this to break her like many would, she took it as a part of her mission. Sadly, Ntsoaki Ledimo was diagnosed with breast cancer, a plight that 1 in 26 in South Africa face. During her battle, she had a double mastectomy performed. Yet, this showed her something she had never glimpsed in herself.

"I wish I could say it's because I'm strong and leave it at that. But at the height of my struggle, community of friends, family and healthcare workers carried me. I am blessed with great support structure of people that speak life into me, and the love I have for my children kept me strong. I don't consider cancer as a stumbling block but rather a new opportunity and re-introduction to myself."

Sadly, her father was diagnosed and passed on. Yet, this showed her the pitfalls of the medical sector and made her understand that intervention is key.

"Me surviving Cancer taught me that it takes much more than just luck to survive it. My father didn't have the best of healthcare and that will always break my heart because it means I didn't have to lose him. This is why I am committed to helping especially communities I came from, that don't have the best access to good healthcare."

The SNL Foundation started off as an offshoot of her already existing venture but soon grew to be a presence of its own, focusing on cancer awareness and giving disadvantaged communities better access to health care. The collaboration with Black Women Arise and Sebatso Tsaoane was driven by a deeply personal mission—to improve healthcare access in disadvantaged communities. The realization that her father's fate might have been different with better healthcare fueled her commitment to making a tangible difference. During the planning and research phase for initiatives in the Free State, she discovered Sebatso Tsaoane and was inspired by her incredible work in cancer research and development. Sebatso, a lecturer, mother, and reproductive health expert, had single-handedly procured a mobile clinic to serve communities with limited healthcare access. Her dedication to saving lives and creating real change made her an ideal partner. Supporting individuals like Sebatso, who are genuinely passionate about making a difference, is essential to driving lasting impact in the fight for better healthcare.

Additionally, her support for international initiatives like Malaak Compton-Rock's AngelRock Project and Yolanda Miya's Raise The Children stems from a shared commitment to community upliftment. The common thread among these initiatives is a dedication to lifting others while ensuring that their impact extends beyond their own success. These women are not only accomplished business leaders but also champions of lasting change. Joining forces with them was a natural decision, as their work aligns closely with the mission of the SNL Foundation. Beyond their broader impact, these initiatives have also made a meaningful difference in her personal life, reinforcing her belief in the power of collective efforts to transform the lives of young girls and boys.

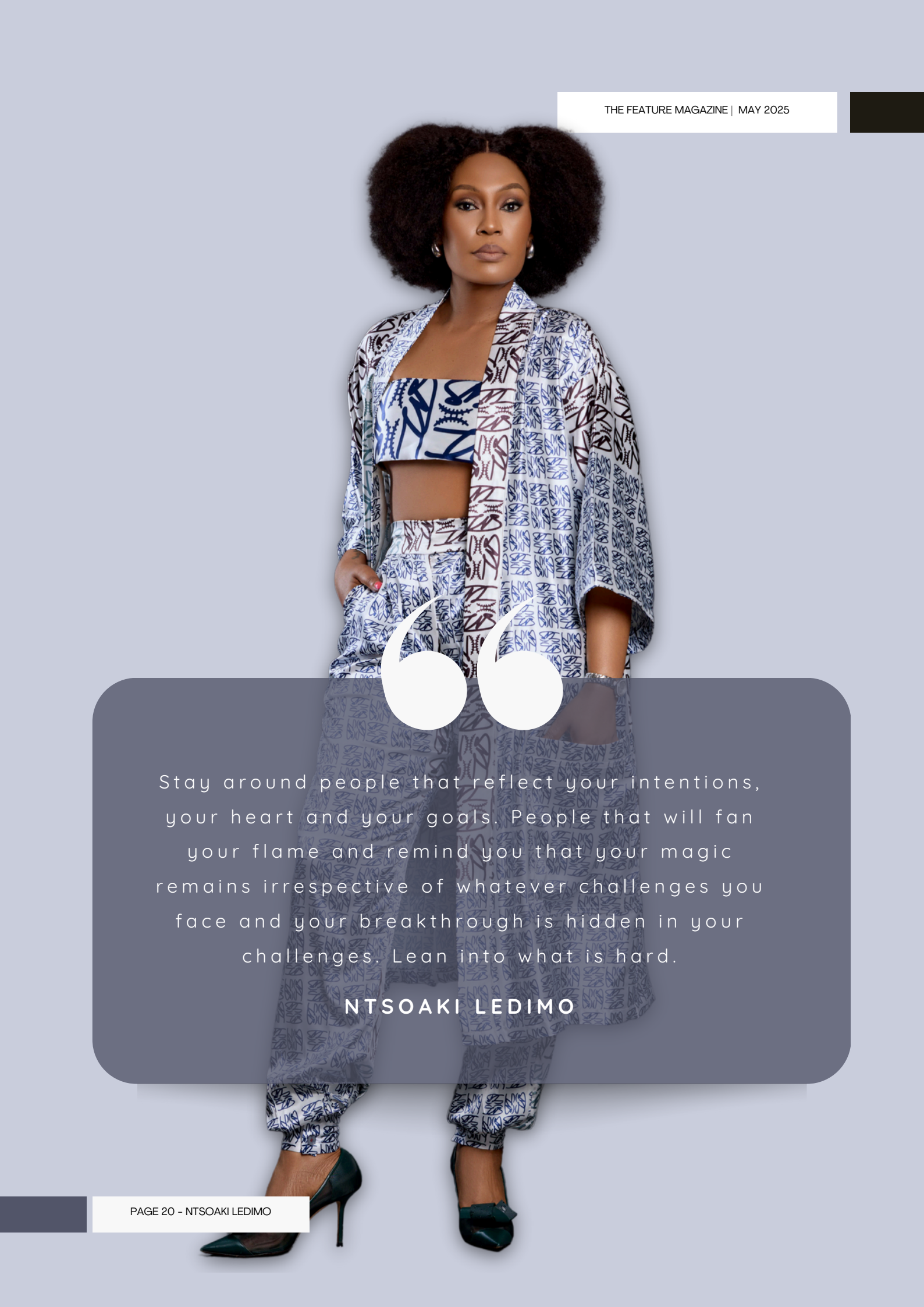


Ntsoaki Ledimo is many things: business owner, philanthropist, and survivor. Her hope for the future and impact she makes keep her going.

"I really pray that SNL grows into a national, continental and global home so that it's able to inject needed funds into the SNL Foundation and it can help us fulfill our mission and vision. SNL will branch into various other ideas such as skin care products for people who survive cancer or any other illness that affect skin, image, and confidence."

Although many would find her mission and purpose daunting, she has her own secret to how far she has come and will continue to climb.

Ntsoaki Ledimo's story is one of resilience, community, and purpose. Whether through fashion, philanthropy, or entrepreneurship, she continues to light the way for others, proving that passion and giving back can go hand in hand.

A full-body photograph of a woman with a large, dark afro hairstyle. She is wearing a white and blue patterned ensemble consisting of a long-sleeved open jacket, a matching crop top, and wide-leg trousers. She is also wearing dark green high-heeled shoes. The background is a solid light blue. A large white quotation mark is superimposed over the center of the image, framing the text below.

Stay around people that reflect your intentions,
your heart and your goals. People that will fan
your flame and remind you that your magic
remains irrespective of whatever challenges you
face and your breakthrough is hidden in your
challenges. Lean into what is hard.

NTSOAKI LEDIMO



*To the Ones Who Show
Up, Love Hard, and
Nurture Deep*



The Digital World

What Women Face

It would be a serious oversight to suggest that the digital age has not delivered immense and often revolutionary benefits to society. These are benefits that previous generations could scarcely have envisioned. From the early days of dial-up internet, where connection was both slow and sporadic, to the modern era of lightning-fast broadband and ubiquitous smartphones that now rest in the pockets and palms of people around the globe, the digital world has transformed the way we live, work, and communicate. The rise of the internet has enabled instantaneous global connectivity, breaking down geographical, linguistic, and cultural barriers in ways that have redefined the very concept of human interaction. Education, commerce, healthcare, entertainment, and personal relationships have all been reshaped by digital technologies, offering unprecedented levels of access, efficiency, and convenience. It is no exaggeration to say that the digital revolution has altered the trajectory of civilization.

Yet in our eagerness to celebrate these advancements, we often fail to interrogate who benefits most from this new world and at what cost. An aspect that remains frequently overlooked is the experience of women within this rapidly evolving digital landscape. While technology has created opportunities for empowerment, entrepreneurship, self-expression, and connection, it has also become a space where existing inequalities are replicated and, in some cases, intensified. With the ever-growing number of digital platforms and increasing user engagement, there exists a persistent threat to the safety of women in ways that demand urgent consideration. From the outset, the issue of cyberbullying alone requires the full attention of the public.

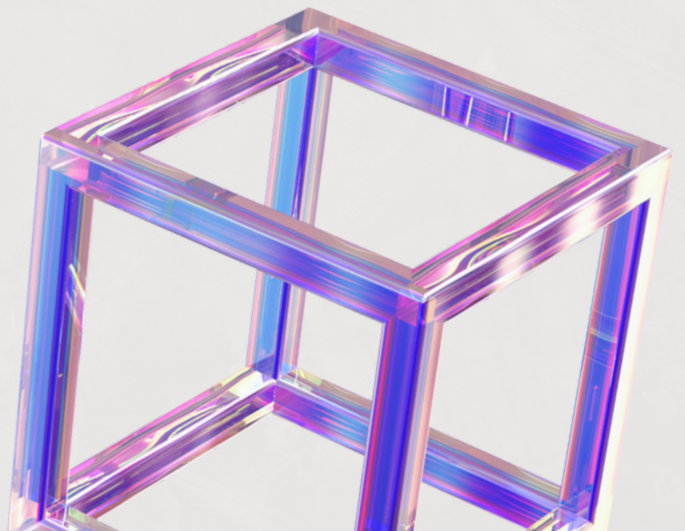
Digital spaces can be avenues of meaningful engagement, but they also harbor elements of hostility where the user base turns against individuals in ways that have led to severe consequences. Many have experienced deteriorating mental health and damaged reputations because of what is said about them online. Alarming, there is a disproportionate focus on shaming women, particularly around issues such as body image and sexual behavior. A disturbing extension of this culture is the rise of deepfake adult content, which directly attacks a woman's right to sexual expression and autonomy.

To those unfamiliar, deepfake adult content may sound like an obscure misuse of technology, but its impact is both real and deeply harmful. This form of digital abuse uses artificial intelligence and advanced image-generation software to manipulate or fabricate explicit material. Often, it begins with a single photograph of an unsuspecting woman, such as a selfie, a professional headshot, or a candid image shared online. Sophisticated AI tools are then used to superimpose her face onto someone else's body in pornographic images or videos that appear disturbingly realistic.

Even though the woman never participated in or consented to such content, the fabricated material can spread rapidly across the internet. Often she remains unaware until the damage is already done. The consequences can be devastating. Her reputation may be tarnished, her relationships may suffer, and she may face humiliation, harassment, and psychological trauma. In many instances, these images are used as tools for blackmail or to punish women, transforming technology into a weapon of gendered violence.

What makes this phenomenon especially insidious is the illusion of legitimacy that deepfakes create. Unlike earlier forms of digital editing that were relatively easy to detect, today's AI-generated visuals are so convincing that even family and close friends may struggle to discern their authenticity. This realism allows false narratives to flourish and unfairly places the burden of proof on the victim. Even when she has done nothing wrong, a woman may be forced to defend her dignity and identity in a world all too ready to believe what it sees.

Another serious and frightening digital threat faced by women is doxxing. Doxxing refers to the malicious act of publishing an individual's private or identifying information on the internet without their consent. This includes details such as home addresses, phone numbers, and workplace information. It is often done through social media or anonymous forums with the intent to harass, threaten, or intimidate. While anyone can be targeted, women are especially vulnerable, particularly those who speak out on public platforms, engage in activism, or hold leadership roles in journalism and politics.



In South Africa, where gender-based violence is already at crisis levels, the dangers of doxxing are heightened. When a woman's address is exposed to strangers or potential abusers, the digital threat quickly becomes a real-world risk. Doxxing can lead to stalking, physical violence, or worse. Even the mere possibility of such outcomes can cause immense psychological distress, forcing women to live in fear, relocate, or withdraw entirely from digital spaces to protect themselves and their families.

Beyond physical danger, doxxing also contributes to a culture of digital silencing. The fear of having personal information weaponized forces many women to self-censor or disengage from public discourse altogether. This not only violates their personal freedom but also undermines their presence in broader social and political conversations. In this way, doxxing serves as a tool of oppression that punishes women for participating visibly and vocally in society.

These realities raise a crucial question. How do we make digital spaces safer for women in tangible and lasting ways? True digital inclusion requires more than just infrastructure and access. It demands a culture of safety where women can exist online without fear of violence, ridicule, or violation. Safety must be a non-negotiable foundation for participation.

To create safer digital environments, accountability must be a priority. Social media platforms and technology companies must implement and enforce stronger policies to prevent harassment, hate speech, non-consensual image sharing, and the misuse of AI. Reporting systems must be accessible, user-friendly, and responsive. Far too often, women report abuse only to be met with silence or automated responses that dismiss their concerns. This lack of meaningful action communicates that their safety is secondary.

Legislation must also evolve to address the complexities of the digital world. While some countries have made strides in regulating cybercrime and digital abuse, enforcement remains inconsistent. In South Africa and beyond, legal frameworks must be updated to criminalize deepfake pornography and protect victims of doxxing. Lawmakers need to work with digital rights advocates, survivors, and cybersecurity experts to create policies that are not only punitive but also preventative.

Education is another powerful solution. Building a digital culture rooted in empathy, consent, and critical thinking must begin early. Young people should be taught to navigate online spaces responsibly and understand the real-life consequences of their digital actions. Empowering women and girls to know their rights and the tools available to them is equally essential.

Community support plays a vital role in resisting digital harm. Women must have access to safe online spaces where they can share experiences, offer support, and organize for change. Whether through encrypted messaging, moderated groups, or grassroots campaigns, digital sisterhoods help ensure no woman has to face online abuse alone.

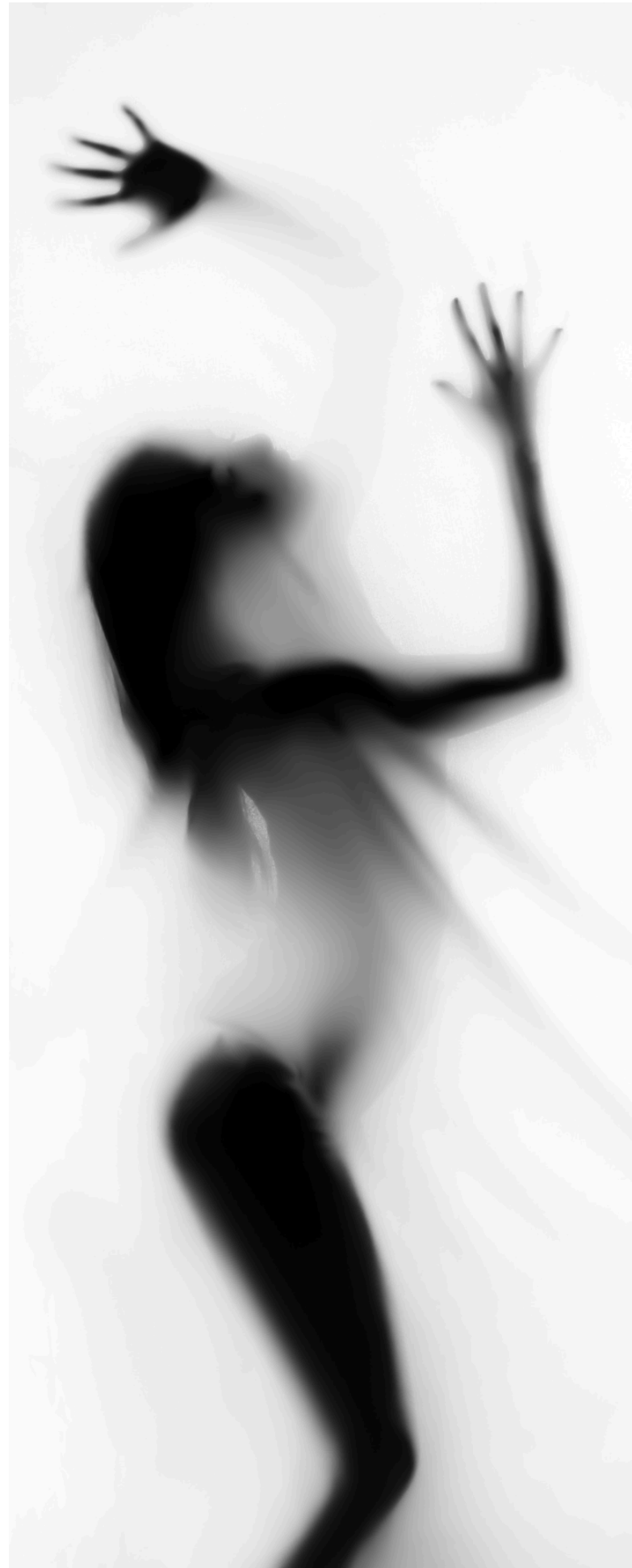
Above all, we must listen. The voices of women in digital spaces should never be dismissed as isolated incidents or unfortunate side effects of technological progress. They are a call to examine the structural flaws of the systems we use daily. By centering the experiences of Black women, queer women, disabled women, and other marginalized voices, we gain a clearer picture of the urgent work that remains.

The digital world holds extraordinary potential, but that potential is meaningless if it comes at the cost of women's safety and dignity. Progress must be measured not only in technological advancement but in the real freedom, security, and agency that every woman is granted when she connects online.

Olwetha Mokonengane

Then there are the diet trends, most recently, the social media-driven surge of interest in ketogenic, paleo, and intermittent fasting lifestyles. At the swipe of a screen, South Africans are introduced to entire eating philosophies, complete with influencers showcasing dramatic transformations and recipe videos promising miracle results. For many, these trends represent hope, a belief that with enough discipline and the right formula, health and confidence are within reach. Whether driven by the desire to feel better, look better, or simply to conform to an often unrealistic ideal of what healthy should look like, countless people have joined this pursuit with sincerity and resolve.

The starting point of women's experience deals with the stigmatization and discrimination they are likely to face in this sector. Obese and overweight women often face stigmatization and discrimination, which can be deeply harmful to their mental and physical health. These women may experience biased treatment in healthcare settings where weight is viewed as the primary determinant of their health, rather than a symptom or factor to be managed alongside other considerations. Healthcare professionals may make assumptions about a woman's lifestyle, intelligence, or worth based on her body size. These prejudices contribute to an environment where these women feel invisible or dehumanized, which only exacerbates feelings of shame and inadequacy.



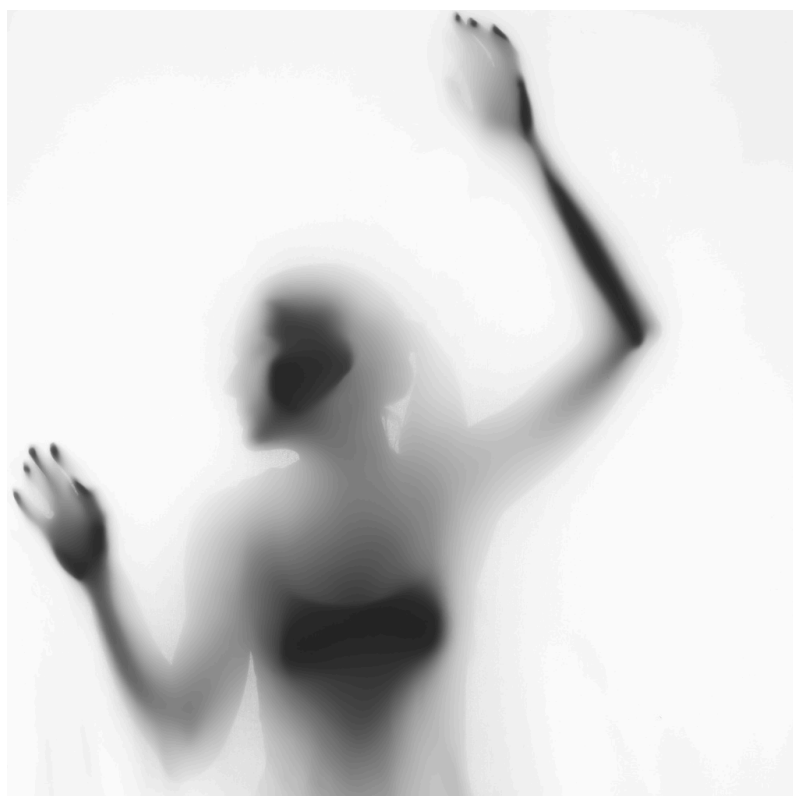
For instance, examination tables and medical chairs in many clinics or hospitals are often not built to accommodate larger body sizes. This can result in uncomfortable or awkward positioning during medical exams, making the entire experience feel more like a chore than a necessary part of health maintenance. The lack of proper seating or equipment can delay the examination or the completion of tests, as healthcare providers may need to search for more suitable tools or make accommodations on the spot, adding unnecessary stress to the patient.

In more extreme cases, the limitations of medical equipment may prevent women from undergoing certain medical procedures entirely. For example, some imaging equipment, such as MRI machines or X-ray devices, may have weight limits that exclude larger patients from using them. This can lead to significant delays in diagnosis, as patients may have to be referred to specialized facilities or wait for adjustments to be made. Such delays can have a profound impact on health outcomes, particularly if a serious condition is left undiagnosed because the patient was unable to access the necessary equipment.

Aside from the physical discomfort these limitations cause, they also have an emotional impact on obese and overweight women. The experience of not fitting comfortably into medical chairs or having to ask for special accommodations can be humiliating. This sense of embarrassment may discourage patients from seeking out medical care in the future, which can lead to prolonged periods of untreated health conditions. In a healthcare environment that should prioritize patient comfort and dignity, these challenges further contribute to the stigma that larger women already face in the medical field.

An often unseen paradox lies at the heart of the healthcare system. While obesity and being overweight are associated with various health risks, such as heart disease, diabetes, and joint problems, these issues should not be the sole focus of a woman's care. The healthcare system often places a disproportionate emphasis on weight loss as the primary solution to many health concerns, sometimes neglecting the broader spectrum of a patient's needs. When healthcare providers focus predominantly on weight, it can overshadow other important aspects of health that may not be directly related to body size but are just as critical to a woman's well-being.

This overemphasis on weight loss can lead to a lack of comprehensive care, particularly for women dealing with chronic conditions that are not necessarily linked to their weight. A holistic, person-centered approach is necessary, one that recognizes the full humanity of every patient. Until healthcare systems and societies alike reckon with the harm of weight stigma and structural exclusion, the promise of good health will remain just out of reach for many women. That is a loss none of us can afford, because ultimately, health is wealth.



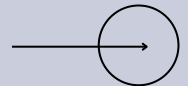


*For Every Woman Who's
Chosen to Mother, in Her
Own Way.*

The Feature.za

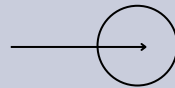
Interview Segment

Q May- 2025



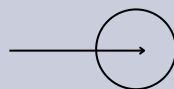
Karabo Taole

Youth is a word that should ignite awe, stir hope, and inspire visions of a future brimming with possibility. Young people hold the raw energy, untamed ideas, and fearless spirit needed to reshape the world or, at the very least, their country.



Makhosi Msimango

When we speak of tourism, we refer not merely to the act of travel or leisure, but to a dynamic global industry that fosters economic growth, cultural exchange, and social cohesion.



Karabo Taole



Youth is a word that should ignite awe, stir hope, and inspire visions of a future brimming with possibility. Young people hold the raw energy, untamed ideas, and fearless spirit needed to reshape the world or, at the very least, their country. In a society like South Africa, rich with diversity, pain, resilience, and ambition, the youth should be at the centre of national conversations, not on the sidelines. Their voices should be loud in boardrooms, echoed in policies, and amplified in the media. Yet, are they?

Every generation of youth inherits the unfinished work of those who came before them: the dreams deferred, the promises half-kept, the battles not yet won. They carry the weight of history on their backs while being told that they are the leaders of tomorrow, as if today doesn't belong to them too.

South Africa boasts a youthful population, yet many young people find themselves disillusioned by politics, disempowered in the workplace, and dismissed in public discourse. The term “youth” is often romanticized and idealized as the solution to the country’s woes, while the actual lived experience of being young in South Africa can be one of frustration, exclusion, and invisibility.

So the question must be asked: in a country that constantly talks about its youth, do the youth truly feel seen? Do they feel heard? Do they feel represented? In leadership, in media, in community decision-making, in the policies that govern their lives?

Because representation isn’t about tokenism or empty slogans. It’s about power. It’s about being part of the conversation that shapes your own future.

While many young people are still trying to find their footing in a system that often sidelines them, there are a few who are boldly stepping forward. They are demanding to be counted, creating their own paths, and making sure their generation won’t be overlooked.

Karabo Taole is a woman who is both youth and someone who is standing for a cause in her own way. As a member of a beauty pageant, her inspiration was not solely due to vanity. Instead, it dealt with a message she hoped would resonate.

“In the beginning, I felt like I needed a platform in order for me to be able to establish my shelters because I want to build shelters for men and women facing gender-based violence, substance abuse, and those types of things.”

Her beauty pageant, Teen Universe South Africa, not only allowed her the much-needed platform, but it also showed her the power which lurked within her.

“I needed to find out more about women empowerment and everything related to it.”

Her shelters were driven by her own experiences that would have marred someone her age with bitterness and resentment. Instead, her experiences allowed her to see the world and what could be changed about it.

“Growing up I’ve had to endure different types of abuse and I wouldn’t want people to go through what I went through because it literally tore me down. I wouldn’t want the youth to find themselves in the wrong path or driven into doing something they shouldn’t do, because I almost found myself in that path.”

With a bigger purpose ordained on her shoulders, one would be shocked to hear she is a high school student in Matric. Despite how hard her schedule is, she deftly handles it with time management and scheduling. Her experiences have been more than rewarding.

“It definitely has to be growing. The Teen Universe South Africa experience was my first national pageant and I got to learn so much about myself and actually realize I’ve been limiting myself so much by being this person, instead of growing out of my comfort zone and finding an environment that’s bigger than me.”

Although pageantry can be filled with positive memories and a togetherness that only women can architect, it is not without its own challenges. Teen beauty pageants, while often seen as platforms for confidence and talent, come with a host of issues. They can place immense pressure on young girls to conform to narrow beauty standards, sometimes encouraging unhealthy comparisons, body image issues, and low self-esteem. Behind the glitz and glamour, there’s also the stress of competition, financial strain on families, and in some cases, the over-sexualization of minors. For many teens, the line between empowerment and exploitation becomes dangerously thin. Yet, she possesses her own toolkit that allows her to soar.

“The first thing I resort to is prayer. I believe it is the one thing that has sustained me throughout my whole pageant experience... The second thing had to be my family members.”

Her pageant journey was filled with memorable moments, yet she looks at one as the highlight.

“When I won Miss Lady Brand Teen in 2023. It was my second time entering the pageant. The first time, I only made it to the top 5. It was my first big pageant and in 2022 I was like ‘I deserve to go back to the pageant and give myself another shot’. Considering how much I learned about pageantry back then and I came out on top.”

Karabo’s emphasis on community engagement and service sets her apart from others who use beauty to collude influence within the beauty pageant scene.

“You can’t ask for support from your community and not give in turn. Therefore it shows the community you are deeply rooted in your community ... And also to do something with your sash and journey.”

As largely self-taught, she has used all the resources she could find to hone her latent skill into what it is today. Her skills have also been expanded.

“I’ve always been an antisocial person, but definitely networking. The first and most important is communication, networking with other people, and socializing.”

Youth is a word that should ignite awe, stir hope, and inspire visions of a future brimming with possibility. Karabo Taole embodies that spirit. She is not waiting for permission or ideal conditions—she is acting now. Her story is a reminder that the youth are not a promise of what could be. They are the power of what is.





HAPPY
MOTHER'S
DAY

Celebrating all mothers

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Makhosi Msimango



When we speak of tourism, we refer not merely to the act of travel or leisure, but to a dynamic global industry that fosters economic growth, cultural exchange, and social cohesion. In South Africa, tourism is more than a sector. It is a national asset, rich with potential and deeply intertwined with the country's identity. As one of the largest contributors to the nation's GDP, tourism plays a critical role in job creation, entrepreneurship, and regional development. It enables South Africa to present itself not as a troubled or regressive nation, a perception too often perpetuated by outdated narratives, but as a country of depth, resilience, and diversity. Through tourism, South Africa tells its own story, on its own terms.

The power of this industry came into sharp focus during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, a defining moment in post-apartheid South Africa. As millions of eyes turned toward the southern tip of the continent, South Africa stood ready, not only with modern stadiums and efficient transport networks, but with warmth, hospitality, and pride. The event served as a national awakening, revealing the immense value the country had long held within its borders: its people, its landscapes, its cultures, and its untold stories. From the bustling urban centres of Johannesburg and Cape Town to the sweeping vistas of the Drakensberg and the coastal beauty of the Garden Route, South Africa emerged as a must-visit destination, capable of competing with the world's best.

Olwetha Mokonengane

However, just as the industry seemed poised for even greater growth, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and brought the global tourism sector to a halt. South Africa's borders closed, flights were grounded, and vibrant destinations fell quiet. The impact on the local tourism economy was devastating. Thousands of operators, particularly small and community-based businesses, were forced to shut down. Jobs were lost, and entire communities that relied on tourism were pushed into economic hardship. It was a painful reminder of how vulnerable the sector could be in times of crisis.

Yet, as history has often shown, South Africa does not remain down for long. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the tourism sector began to rebuild with determination and creativity. Strategic recovery plans, digital marketing campaigns, and a strong focus on domestic travel laid the groundwork for revival. Emphasis was placed on sustainable tourism models, rural tourism development, and experiences that centre community participation and benefit. Tourists began returning, drawn once more by South Africa's beauty, hospitality, and soul.

A significant part of this recovery and reimagining has been the rise of distinctly African tourism. Beyond the safaris and coastal getaways, there is a growing demand for experiences that allow visitors to connect deeply with South Africa's people, culture, and traditions. Cultural tourism has become a pillar of the sector's renewal. Travellers are looking for real stories, authentic encounters, and meaningful exchanges. They want to learn about indigenous traditions, explore township life through the eyes of local guides, experience the vibrancy of African art and cuisine, and witness how heritage is preserved through music, dance, and storytelling.

Few people understand the value of cultural and community-based tourism better than Makhosi Msimango, a dedicated advocate for sustainable travel and the founder of a growing tourism initiative that puts people first. Her work exemplifies the spirit of post-pandemic tourism in South Africa, rooted in heritage, driven by passion, and focused on creating impact. Her journey with Ndzenza Tours and Safaris was something implanted in her before she knew what to do with it or how powerful it would be.

"Ndzenza Tours and Safaris derived from a passion that I have of traveling and the love I have for my culture."

Growing up during the era of travel timeshares, homes shared by families for specific periods, Makhosi was exposed early to game reserves and the world of travel. Her idea for a business began to form after a seemingly small incident during one of those visits.

"There was a tour guide that made a mistake and I think my passion just came out. He pointed at a lion and zebra from a distance and mistakenly said there's a zebra chasing a lion. I think my passion was ignited then and I instantly corrected him."

Makhosi bypassed the conventional route of high school to university, choosing instead to start her tourism business straight away in an industry dominated by established names. She then went on to acquire a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurship via Unisa which sharpened her instincts and insights which proved valuable when an opportunity presented itself.

"I attended my first reed dance and I also noticed something that gave me an opportunity to start this niche product I currently have. So attending my first reed dance, I noticed a number of tourists being turned back."

This moment sparked an idea that would later allow her to break into the previously untapped market of Zululand.

"Something clicked".

She soon realized tourists would also be interested in Zulu Royal Palace tours, an opportunity that would set her venture apart.

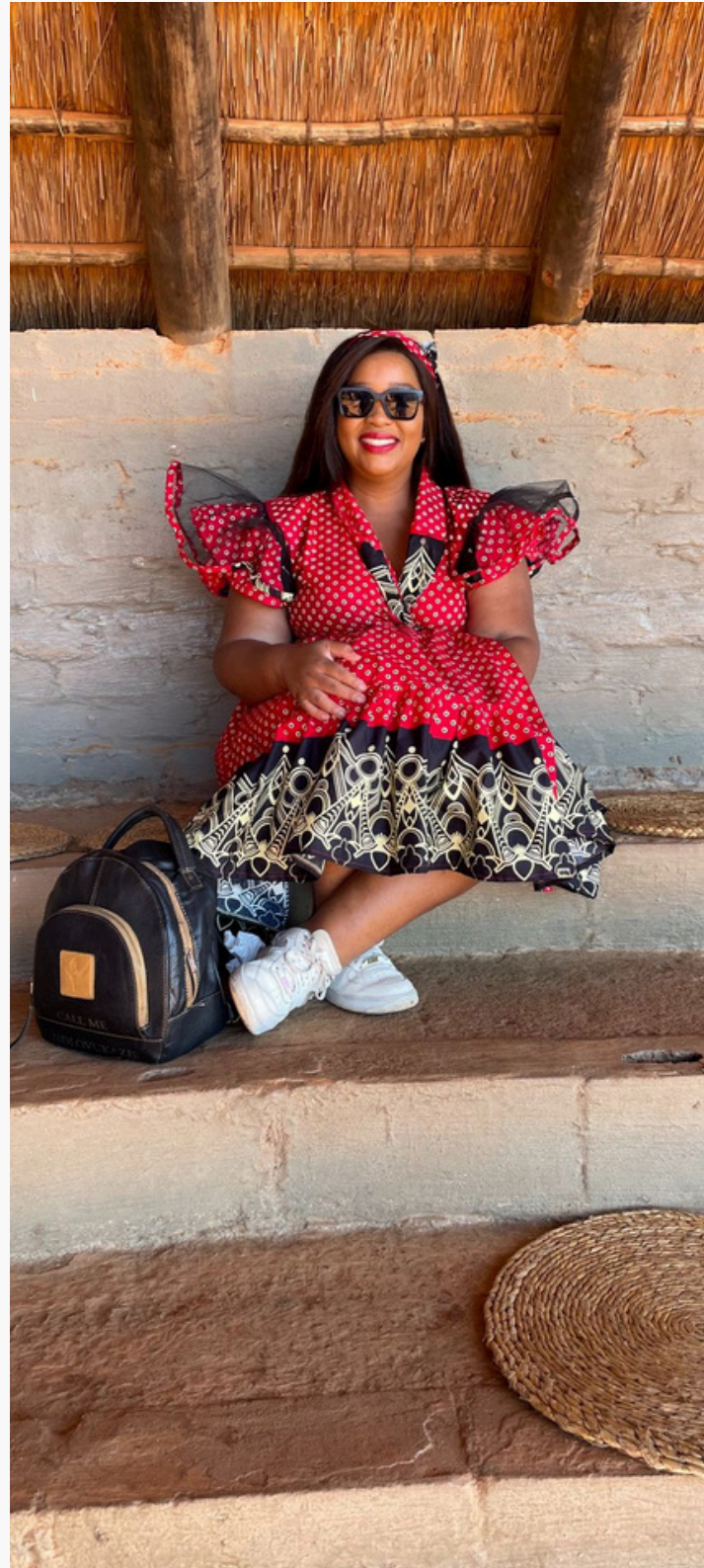
"In 2015, I obtained exclusive rights to take tourists and visitors into the Zulu Royal Palaces on an annual basis. Once I obtained those rights, I was able to start creating a niche product. As a Zulu person, I am a custodian of my culture. Selling our products to tourists is something that keeps me up at night. So, I created a product that we now call KINGDOM TO KINGDOM TOURS. We've now expanded not only to the Zulu royal kingdom, but also Eswatini Royal kingdom."

"We're also in talks with the Zimbabwe Tourism authority and the necessary politicians on that side, to also extend it to the Zimbabwe Royal Palaces."

Her journey, which began in 2006, was never going to be easy. The tourism industry was largely male and Caucasian dominated, but Makhosi persisted.

"When I registered my business, I was the first black tour operator in KZN. So, the journey has been challenging."

She faced many obstacles, including prejudice in the boardroom.



"There was a time I was meant to pitch to board members. I walked in there... One of them said 'I'll take black coffee and two sugars.' Initially, you picked up on the vibe instantly. I think the nice thing about it was that it not only strengthened me or taught my team about diversity or transformation. It also taught them something. I also had to pitch in Afrikaans."

Makhosi used these challenges as motivation to build a legacy, one that creates easier access for others.

"Just to change how things are done in the industry. So, when it's somebody else's turn they pick up from where I left off. Not to say I started through hell so you also have to go through hell. No, it is to say I went through hell on behalf of everybody so this is the legacy I'm leaving behind."

What distinguishes Ndzenza Tours and Safaris is its foundation and purpose. The name, "Ndzenza," derived from Angola, means "strength of the tree." Makhosi has secured rights that span 99 years, and the company has received numerous awards for service excellence, testaments to the impact each journey leaves on its clients. Yet, the mission extends beyond tourism. She has a deep love for Africa. Although she is proudly South African, she views herself as African first and sources her inspiration from the continent.

"We want to give authentic tourism experiences. The only authentic experience they can get is by living and mingling with the locals. That's why our products also extend to that... They want to mingle with our culture."

Through her work and various leadership positions, including the BRICS Woman Business Alliance- South Africa, Makhosi uplifts communities by ensuring local benefit wherever tours go.

"That has allowed other businesses to create awareness in certain communities that we deal with. To make an example for Ndzenza Tours, when we take tours to a certain area we ensure we use the local tour guides and source everything from that side locally."

To her, leadership is about collaboration, growth, and emotional intelligence.

"I, as the leader, don't always lead. I give others the opportunity and chance to lead."

Among her most cherished experiences was arranging an unforgettable visit to the Zulu Royal Palace, ensuring her client not only met the King but was embraced by the entire Royal family.

Makhosi also has her eye on the future and the trends shaping the industry.

"Trends are forever changing. If Uber is in, then the industry will pick up on that trend. We currently have Uber safari. For instance, during lockdown, the trend to keep us relevant as an industry was online safari tours. So, we're flexible to the change. The next one I foresee coming up is AI. So when it comes to communicating with our visitors, the booking systems will be changed with AI."

Her vision for Ndzenza Tours and Safaris continues to expand, with international offices in sight.

"The vision that I've had is to expand our products. Currently we have offices in Gauteng, Durban, and Cape Town. Currently, we would like to expand into Australia, the Netherlands, and preferably the United States. Mainly to have visibility in those countries."



Additionally, she has partnered with a number of SADC Countries Tourism Organizations as she is a firm advocate and lobbyist for Inter-Continental Travel and Trade. When we speak of tourism, we speak of people like Makhosi, visionaries who do more than move bodies across borders. They build bridges between cultures, reshape outdated narratives, and plant seeds of pride and prosperity that will bear fruit for generations.

Olwetha Mokonengane

