

LALELA MSWANE - KWASOKHULU, RICHARDS BAY, KWAZULU-NATAL

Name: Lalela Mswane

Region: KwaSokhulu, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal

Age: 24 (March 27, 1997)

Occupation:

I am a model and dancer and I hold a Bachelor of Law qualification from the University of Pretoria.



Previous beauty competitions or pageants you have entered:

I was the first runner up at the Matric Experience 2015 pageant.

Why did you decide to enter Miss South Africa 2021 and why do you deserve to win this title?

I entered Miss South Africa 2021 in pursuit of a childhood dream. I deserve to win this title because I believe that my advocacy against the abatement of unemployment in our nation is one which requires dire attention and having the full support of the Miss South Africa Organisation would provide greater impact in the quest for meaningful and long-lasting solutions. I possess the compassion, tenacity, leadership and people skills which render me a worthy title holder. With a willing heart, an open mind and an eagerness to learn and grow, it would be an absolute honour to reign as Miss South Africa 2021.

Tell us about your biggest disappointment and how you bounced back from it.

Being rejected by clients in the modelling industry. Patience and a mentality shift aided my bounce back. Rejection helped mould the resolute lady I am today, and my indomitable will to succeed is fortified each time I'm told "no".

What do you think is the biggest problem facing young people today?

Young people suffer the greatest self-esteem and body-image issues today more than ever. They constantly subject themselves to comparison and always feel like they fall short of societal standards of beauty. This, I believe is among the leading causes of bullying and depression in a lot of young people.

Who are your role models?

My mother is my greatest role model. She is the greatest giver of love, patience, kindness, affection and support. She never fails to extend grace even when she experiences injustice. With exceptional resilience, strength and profound wisdom, if I could be only half the woman she is, I would truly be one great woman. I also find inspiration in the late actress, Audrey Hepburn. She was a classic beauty and style icon, and always radiated effortless elegance yet what made her the most beautiful was her philanthropy.

Tell us a bit more about your family?

My father passed away in 2010, leaving behind my mother, my siblings and me. I am the last born of three. My sister, Hlobisile (37), holds a BCom Honours in Business Management but is employed in the training and occupational assessments field. My brother Mavela (35) opted to go the electrical engineering route. My mom, Hleliselwe, was an accounts clerk and

after years in the labour force decided to assume the great responsibility of being a homemaker.

What do you do in your spare time?

If I'm not reading, you'll find me changing my nail colour or organising my clothing cupboards.

What is your single biggest achievement?

Obtaining my Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Pretoria in minimum time.

In what way do you think beauty pageants are still relevant today?

With representation being broader in beauty pageants today more than ever, pageants make one loud statement: there is beauty in diversity. Pageantry is empowering and gone are the days where the focal point pageants was beauty. Pageants are now a magnificent platform on which charitable causes are promoted and societal issues are addressed, and significant solutions are sought.

What is your message to young girls and young women in South Africa?

My message is twofold. Firstly, there is strength in unity. So much greatness can be achieved when we unite as women in support of each other. Another female's success should inspire you and show you that it is possible, even for you. Let us be a generation that exemplifies the notion "empowered women, empower women". Secondly, women possess everything within them to achieve anything. Our greatness is innate. We need to stop playing small and shrinking ourselves to fit in.

What do you love about South Africa?

Our country is extremely rich in diversity, heritage, culture and history. We boast a beautiful nation abundant in picturesque scenery but my favourite thing about South Africa is our people and their steadfast spirit in the face of any adversity. We also never fail to make humour the centre of any situation, good or bad, I love that!

What is one thing you would like to change about South Africa?

The shortage of employment opportunities is so disheartening, particularly in a nation so full of talented and educated people. Our nation lacks the infrastructure to nurture talent and provide platforms conducive to the creation of employment. Consequently, so many South Africans with the best of ideas and talent resort to immigrating to countries where employment opportunities are plenty. That is something I would like to change.

2020 and 2021 have been extraordinary years and difficult for people around the globe. Do you see any positives in what has happened in the past 18 months?

The unity, compassion and empathy that people have displayed is beautiful. My hope in humanity was restored as I witnessed and continue to witness the kindness and grace people are extending to each other. Where one lacks, another provides. While the pandemic has taken so much from us, we choose to lead with love and goodwill.

If you won the Miss South Africa crown and was able to meet one person, who would it be and why?

I would love to meet Thulas Nxesi, Minister of Employment and Labour. With the reduction of unemployment being my primary advocacy, the opportunity to engage him on the matter and hopefully contribute towards the paving of meaningful changes in this regard would be an absolute honour.

What is the one thing people would be surprised to know about you?

I sucked my thumb for the first 18 years of my life.

What is the No 1 piece of advice that you would give to your younger self?

I would tell myself to be gentle with myself, get rid of the idea that I must be perfect and look and act a certain way to be accepted. To let go, let God and simply live trusting that everything will be okay, and if it's not okay, it's not the end.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

Describe yourself in three words:

Graceful, tenacious and meticulous.

What's the best advice you can give in exactly four words?

To be fearlessly authentic.

Who's your favourite designer and why?

David Tlale because his designs are pure genius. The feeling invoked in one while adorned in his garments is magical, it's unmatched. You get the sense that each piece was specially curated with you in mind.

You have to give up one of these? Handbags or shoes?

Tough one but I'd say handbags simply because I cannot walk barefoot.

What is one thing that we would not know about you just by looking at you?

That I am a dancer. My posture gives it away.

What would be your dream holiday?

A week-long summer vacation in Bora-Bora, a small South Pacific island northwest of Tahiti in French Polynesia with my mom and siblings.

If you could have any superhuman power, what would it be?

Definitely teleportation. Imagine how much time I would save and how many places I'd visit!

What are you reading?

Various Positions - a novel about ballet by Martha Schabas.

What music are you listening to?

Classical music by cellist Stjepan Hauser.

What is your favourite TV show?

I enjoyed the series *Devious Maids*.

What is your favourite meal?

I love seafood.

Who is your local and international celeb crush?

Maps Maponyane and Neymar da Silva Santos Junior.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Dancing and singing in front of a mirror as if I were performing for a sold-out show.

Social media:

- Facebook: Lalela lali Mswane
- Instagram: @Lalela_mswane
- Twitter: @Lalela_lali