

**Nthabiseng Kgasi**, 30, from Soweto, Gauteng (she now lives in Douglasdale, Bryanston) is a Marketing Manager who wants to help bridge the digital divide for people in underserved communities. One of her conditions for joining the telecommunications company she is at was that she works on empowering projects – such as the platform to give young entrepreneurs a space to grow their businesses using the company's resource libraries. She holds Bachelors and Honours degrees in Marketing and Communications in Media from Monash University. In addition to her corporate role, Nthabiseng runs a small social media management company helping businesses build and grow their digital presence. In 2016 she was crowned Miss Soweto. That same year she placed as 2<sup>nd</sup> Princess in the Miss Heritage South Africa pageant.

She says she entered the competition this year because she wants to use the platform to share her solutions on how best to bridge the digital divide. "We live in a globalized world and it's imperative that we find solutions so our children will not be left behind in a digitally advanced world. As a proud young woman from Soweto, I want to share my firsthand experience of how systemic inequalities can limit both personal potential and our potential to grow as an economy.

Beauty pageants she says tell the stories of different women, all of whom, like her, want to advocate for a better South Africa. "These pageants are important as they show there is more to women than just looks. These women, intent on making a meaningful difference, need courage, patience (to assess situations without haste), self-reliance, and empathy (the ability to stand in other people's shoes).

To this end, to cater for a diverse community, Miss South Africa has to be inclusive and representative. We are the Rainbow Nation; we come in different shapes and forms. The pageant ought to reflect this. Also, the titleholder has to reflect the everyday stories of the people who make up this country.

Nthabiseng comes from a supportive family of four: Dad Piet, Mom, Stephinah and younger brother, Peterson. "My dad encouraged me to enter the Miss Soweto pageant, and my mother used her free time to accompany me to shoots. They've taught me values like commitment, respect, kindness, and love and their support has shaped me to understand the importance of showing up for others, staying grounded, and never being afraid to attempt something new.

Nthabiseng believes she is contributing to society through her career – working with big corporate players ensures the cycle of sustainable business practices that benefit the community and through her startup digital marketing business.

"Women's businesses lack support so I target small women-owned "kasi" businesses, offering women affordable services to help them attract new customers through digital visibility. I have managed to make a small impact that I know will scale up and grow."

Many in underserved communities have the talent and ideas to contribute to the growth of the economy, but lack of access to digital tools which affects all facets of the community, including education, entrepreneurship, and healthcare.

Nthabiseng says: "I want to use the Miss South Africa title to develop practical solutions that meet real needs by engaging the government and private sector to start digital education from the grassroots levels."

South Africans deep respect for human rights makes her proud. "Our Constitution, born out of a painful, complex past, is one of the most progressive pieces of law in the world, reflecting our commitment to building a society rooted in dignity, equality, and justice."

It is the kind of success that she values – her definition of success being making a sustainable impact or difference. She says: "If something you are publicly proud motivates you and inspires others – that is a success."

Unemployment is what she lists as the biggest challenge facing youth and says bridging the digital divide is key to solving this problem. "By improving access to digital skills and tools, we can empower people to create their own opportunities while fostering creativity and building sustainable futures for many South Africans."

Nthabiseng's message to young women: "Invest in yourself, educate yourself and develop a skill or craft. Being self-reliant is important because it means you can pursue any dream. Economic freedom is your way out, so don't stop until you're truly independent."

It is her dream to use the Miss South Africa platform to create digital spaces where young people from different backgrounds can collaborate, share ideas, and build solutions together.

"Unity starts when people create together, share together, and win together."

"If I could launch one national initiative, it would be called Bridging the Divide, a digital access and skills drive focused on township and rural communities. Closing the digital gap creates local opportunities but also lets South Africans to participate globally."

#### Fact File: Nthabiseng

1. Is a netball player who stays active through sport.
2. Was the first Miss Soweto to win with short natural hair.
3. Took ballroom dancing classes.
4. Is terrified of dark water, a condition called thalassophobia.
5. Is happy to start conversations with strangers.
6. Was deeply disappointed at not making it beyond the Top 30 in the Miss SA 2022 competition.
7. Is delighted to have made it to the Top 10 in 2025.
8. Likes that she sees people for themselves and treats everyone equally.
9. Would change nothing about herself as "every experience has shaped who I am today and I am physically satisfied with the way I look."
10. Names as her role models Dr Naledi Pandor – the epitome of academic excellence, courage, and leadership – and Oprah Winfrey – who challenges societal norms about what defines a successful woman.
11. She would lunch with Mam'Naledi Pandor who she thinks is intelligent, courageous, and well-spoken, qualities she wants to emulate.
12. Watches K-dramas (Korean) and reading in her spare time.

## SHORT-FIRE QUESTIONS

1. Reading: Capitec Stalking Giants by TJ Strydom.
2. Listening to: Amapiano (all tracks produced by Simple Keyz).
3. Favourite TV shows: The Big Bang Theory, The Walking Dead.
4. Favourite meal: Phutu with Amasi, sugar and butter.
5. Guilty pleasure: Binge-watching K-dramas (Korean).
6. Idea of perfect happiness: Living in the moment and enjoying what is going on.
7. Greatest fear: Growing up in Soweto, I've seen how circumstances can limit people. I'm determined never to let that be my story.
8. Greatest extravagance? Travelling which creates memories and teaches lessons that shape me by broadening my worldview.
9. Happiest time: My 30<sup>th</sup> birthday solo trip to Tanzania.
10. Talent most wanted: Mastering multiple languages.
11. Most treasured possession: My heart which guides me to make good decisions.
12. Most valued qualities in friends: How each teaches something different.
13. **Motto: Let your "why" guide you every step of the way.**

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