

## **DANIELLE MARAIS – RANDBURG, JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG**

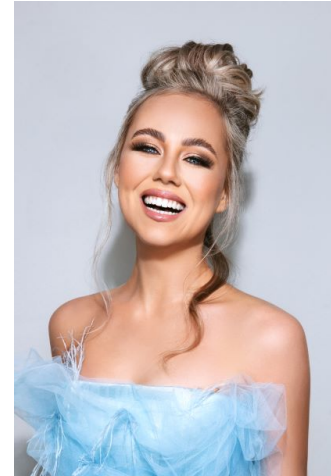
**Name:** Danielle Marais

**Region:** Randburg, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

**Age:** 24 (September 19, 1996)

**Occupation:**

I am a brand manager across 14 African countries and I am lucky to work with people from all over the world. I am also the CEO and founder of the charity, Walk in Freedom. I received my B Com Honours Degree Cum Laude in Entrepreneurship and Marketing Management from the North-West University in 2018.



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

When I was young, we lost everything. I felt hopeless but through entrepreneurship, my dad was able to provide for us and 11 other families, despite having limited resources. I share this feeling of seeming hopelessness with 14 million unemployed South Africans which is why I founded my charity, Walk in Freedom, which creates female-owned businesses. I was inspired by my father's example and Mandela's vision for South Africans to have the freedom to choose their own paths to walk on. Through my degree, I teach women business skills for long term success and fund the start-up capital they need. Miss South Africa will empower me to continue this critically important focus on job creation and female empowerment through entrepreneurship. It is the solution for three key South African improvement areas: unemployment, gender-based violence and the next generation. My outreach is immediate but the impact will last for generations. The Miss South Africa organisational values align with mine and it is an amazing leadership platform that will empower me further to achieve my long-term goals in impacting change. I am ready to face my power and embrace my future.

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

I entered Miss South Africa in 2020 but was not a finalist. This was a big disappointment to me but I bounced back by falling forward and taking it as an opportunity to work on myself. I also believe that you do your best and leave the rest to God.

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

Their future. Almost half of our youth is unemployed. This is why I am passionate about job creation. We owe it to our youth to create opportunities for them within our country.

**Who are your role models/who have inspired you and why?**

My role models and inspiration are the women of South Africa whose names will not be known. The women who are raising children on their own; the women who are surviving despite the GBV they experience; the women who keep serving their communities while having so little to give.

**Tell us a bit more about your family?**

My mom, Teresa is an assistant at Sanlam, my dad, Jacques is an entrepreneur who started his own pool and pond company after there were no employment opportunities. I got my resilience and "nothing is impossible" attitude from him. I am 10 years older than my baby sister (Maricelle, 14).

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I mostly work on my Walk in Freedom charity, but I also draw, read, hike and spend time with people.

**What is your single biggest achievement?**

Starting Walk in Freedom.

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

Society often degrades women and places us in a box. Pageantry breaks those barriers and enables women to dream. I have a long-term goal of creating 3.5 million female-owned businesses. This isn't something I can achieve without a platform. Pageants create platforms that empower women to make meaningful change within their communities and globally.

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

Keep standing up for your worth. You do not deserve to be living in fear. Never settle. Let your voices be heard.

**What do you love about South Africa?**

There is just something about the way we greet each other in the street. We have a deep sense of community and no matter how bad things get, South Africans will be there for each other. I guess that feeling I get when I am surrounded by South Africans can be summed up as Ubuntu.

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

Our unemployment rate. By creating female-owned businesses we will create employment opportunities, address GBV and empower our youth.

**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?**

After having COVID, my family and I are in recovery. We join the 1.7 million South Africans who have survived. There are 1.7 million things to be thankful for from the last 18 months. Let's take a moment to focus on the good. We will get through this together.

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

President Cyril Ramaphosa. I want to discuss avenues of impacting change and platforms that can be made available to me to serve our communities.

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

I have won SA Karate twice.

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

You are not a product of your circumstances. You are a product of your dreams and the work you put in to turn them into goals. Keep turning those dreams into goals.

**QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS**

**Describe yourself in three words:**

Compassionate, undeniable, optimistic.

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

Don't live in disappointment.

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

Shoes. My Dad gave me a handbag for my 21st birthday and I will never give it up. I enjoy being barefoot anyway.

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

Three years ago, I shaved my head in support of CANSA and a friend.

**What would be your dream holiday?**

Anywhere new. I love adventures.

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

Time control.

**What are you reading?**

*Rising Strong* by Brene Brown.

**What music are you listening to?**

Worship music. Maneskin is my newest favourite band.

**What are your favourite TV shows?**

*Schitt's Creek*, *Grey's Anatomy*.

**What is your favourite meal?**

Dessert.

**Who is your local and international celeb crush?**

Trevor Noah. Does he count as my local and international celeb crush?

**What's your guilty pleasure?**

Naps.

**Your social media tags:**

- Facebook: Danielle Marais /Charity Walk in Freedom
- Instagram: @Marais\_Dani /Charity @WalkInFreedomSA
- Twitter: @Marais\_Dani /Charity @WalkInFreedomSA
- [www.WalkInFreedom.co.za](http://www.WalkInFreedom.co.za)