

LEHLOGONOLO MACHABA – LETLHABILE, NORTH WEST

Name:

Lehlogonolo Machaba

Region:

Oskraal, Letlhabile in the North West

Age: 24 (December 8, 1996)

Occupation:

I currently work as a model booker at Invade Models and am the founder and owner of the DeMollies fashion brand. I hold a diploma in fashion design technology from the Tshwane University of Technology.



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

Transgender women are almost always ostracised from such opportunities which is why I never thought I'd see anyone like myself on such a platform. I believe that being chosen would raise hope in a lot of little girls like myself. It has always been a dream of mine to represent my community at such a high level. The daily murder of queer and trans-identifying people in our country is devastating. Through the Miss South Africa platform, I'd be able to advocate for the LGBTQIA community and more specifically queer-identifying women. I would use this opportunity to empower every marginalised person and become a beacon of hope for young girls out there regardless of whatever it is they think hinders them from attaining whatever goal they have. With patience, perseverance and hard work they can attain anything they put their minds to.

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

When I lost an opportunity to travel to Milan for the Gucci fashion show because of my gender marker and not having the necessary documents to change it. Through that, I've learned that failure is just a redirection of something bigger and better and used it as an opportunity to speak out about my identity on social media which has inspired a lot of people and has educated them on the necessary steps one should take when transitioning.

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

High unemployment and lack of access to information about opportunities that getting an education can bring.

Who are your role models?

My mother. She is the true definition of a strong woman, she survived GBV and lengthy years of being unemployed, and yet through all those challenges she came out strong and graceful. Through her I've learned to never settle for anything below your worth and to put God first before all your plans. Amazing results come to those who know when to fight and when to wait patiently.

Tell us a bit more about your family?

I live with my mother Caroline (43), who is a supervisor of service aid at a public hospital and my little brother, Keorapetse (13), who is in grade seven. My father Mighty Masango (44) is a boilermaker engineer at a public hospital.

What do you do in your spare time?

I volunteer at a local LGBTQIA centre, Access Chapter Two, and help young people with university applications and job applications. I also design clothes for my DeMollies brand.

What is your single biggest achievement?

I won best creative student of the year at university.

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

Through beauty pageants we've seen society and communities aspire for change, inspiring young women to be exceptional and believe in changing the world for the better like Zozibini Tunzi. Young girls like myself are being inspired to dream big and chase their dreams. Beauty pageants are more relevant than ever and are highly inclusive and updated. We've seen them transition over the years from including women with different body shapes, skin tones, different backgrounds to now allowing transgender women like myself to enter.

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

Dream beyond your imagination and always prioritise your education and mental health first.

What do you love about South Africa?

The fact that we are a rainbow nation that is full of diversity.

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

The stigma against queer and trans-identifying individuals.

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?

I've seen that through unity we can conquer anything be it a virus or hate crime. Nothing can stand against us.

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

Laverne Cox. I see myself in her and love what she stands for as a transgender woman and am highly inspired by her ongoing advocacy for women and transgender individuals. She was the first transgender woman to win an Emmy and the first on the cover of Time magazine and continues to break the mould and be an inspiration to all women out there.

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

I enjoy cooking.

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

Be authentic at all times, because you stand out.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

Describe yourself in three words:

Blessed, brave, empowered.

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

Live a purposeful life.

Who's your favourite designer and why?

Rich Mnisi is trendy and authentic to his brand.

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

Handbags.

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

I'm goofy most of the times.

What would be your dream holiday?

Being on a yacht in Santorini with all my family and friends.

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

Telekinesis.

What are you reading?

Montana Sky by Nora Roberts.

What music are you listening to?

Burna Boy and Hillsong worship.

What are your favourite TV shows?

Euphoria, *Pose* and *Sense8*.

What is your favourite meal?

Kota.

Who is your local and international celeb crush?

Thando Thabethe and Rihanna.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Vanilla Haagen-Dazs ice-cream.

Social media tags:

- Facebook: Lehlogonolo Machaba
- Instagram: @Lehlogonolo.Machaba
- Twitter: @De_Lehlogonolo