

## LISANNE LAZARUS – AMANZIMTOTI, KWA ZULU NATAL

**Name:** Lisanne Lazarus

**Region:** Amanzimtoti, KZN

**Age:** 25 (January 10, 1996)

**Occupation:**

I am a PR and brand officer for a local radio station in KZN.



**Previous beauty competitions or pageants:**

- Miss eThekweni 2014, won
- Miss DUT 2015, won
- Miss South Africa Campus 1<sup>st</sup> Runner Up 2016
- Miss Mamelodi Sundowns KZN Princess 2016/17
- Miss Mamelodi Sundowns National 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner Up 2016/17

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

My journey to womanhood has not been an easy one, from the expectations of my conservative upbringing to the expectations from the world on what a woman should be. But I am ready to face my power and embrace my future. It is time to write my own story; to stand tall in my own individuality and to redefine what it means to be a woman. I entered Miss South Africa because the greatest display of change and evolution is through representation. I want to break every limiting expectation anyone has ever had of me and to represent an army of women who has ever been put in a box and held back. I want women and young girls to look at me and see hope, opportunity and a new beginning. The platform of Miss South Africa will be able to amplify that and give me an opportunity to stand as a vessel for every untold story but, most importantly, inspire others to break their own glass ceilings. Being a young professional navigating the corporate world whilst navigating my womanhood too, has taught me lots of life's lessons and through disappointments, challenges and heartbreak comes a new beginning and a rise of a stronger being. My hope is that this will start a chain reaction to a more inclusive generation where we are encouraged to find the beauty in our authenticity.

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

Being accepted into a university for the first time is something every matriculant dreams of. When I was not awarded space at any university for the degree that I wanted to study, I thought my future was compromised and that I was not going to achieve what I had planned out for my life. Instead, I was forced to take a gap year from studies ... and what a gap year it was. I entered my first pageant and dedicated my year to the service of others. The rewards? I helped found an NPO in my community that caters to children at their early childhood development level, and I found myself, my passions, and my career. The next year I got accepted to study my 2<sup>nd</sup> option of career choice and three years later, I received the Dean's Merit for Broadcast Journalism, a career path in telling stories and being the voice of the voiceless.

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

I think that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already high unemployment rate resulting in other multiple issues like mental health. However, inaccessibility to adequate education is really something that continues to cause a ripple effect in the poverty and

unemployment bottom line. I think that if every child on South African soil got an equal chance at an adequate education facility stemming from their formative years, we will be setting ourselves up to have a country of purposeful leaders.

### **Who are your role models?**

Basetsana Khumalo – I am always in awe of how she used the platform of Miss South Africa as the springboard to the rest of her life – and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, a woman who grew up in a traditional home but chose the unconventional route.

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

My father, Gordon is a 52-year-old industrial engineer and pastor in our local community. My mother, Vanessa is a 49-year-old payroll and accounts executive. I am the middle child of four - my eldest sister Latoya (28) is an early education graduate; my younger sister Kayla (23) is completing her BCom degree and my not-so-baby brother Jehiel (15) is in Grade 10.

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

If I am not looking for a cute coffee spot, I Netflix for days or read.

### **What is your single biggest achievement?**

Overcoming my own body insecurities. I went through a phase in my life where the content I was feeding myself on social media became aspirational for me and I dealt with disappointments and hardships through unhealthy lifestyle choices. Two years ago, when I decided to reclaim the driver's seat to my life, I went on a journey of rediscovery. That meant making healthier choices for my mind, body, and soul. Investing in me again. A journey to wholehearted living. I lost 10kgs but gained so much more.

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

Beauty pageants are a way to celebrate women, for who they are, what they look like and to give them a platform. It is a way to make a statement, to give women a microphone so that their voices can be amplified and their stories told.

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

I learnt an important lesson about the power of belief. Your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions and your actions become your reality. So if you have a dream or a goal, if you can think it and speak it, you can achieve it. You are the author to your book, believe in the power of you.

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

I would be doing our country an injustice if I didn't say our diversity. We are an amalgamation of cultures and tribes making us one of the most diverse countries in the world and that is clearly represented in our people, performing arts, landmarks and food.

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

I would introduce a cabinet of children in our government. Children are our most vulnerable yet most valuable assets. More access to early childhood development programmes for our children will in turn result in a more talented and educated future generation where possibilities are endless and limitations do not exist.

### **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 Covid-19 pandemic forced us to get out of our comfort zones, to exercise our creativity and to find our way back to the passions and talents we forgot we had. We learnt how to be

resilient and agile. We saw the start-up of more small businesses and we learnt the valuable lesson of having a backup plan. An how to smile in the face of adversity.

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

Priyanka Chopra Jonas because her transition from a little Indian community to the Big Apple in New York City was something iconic for me to watch growing up. She didn't allow limiting boxes to define her and in fact she went far beyond them. She broke glass ceilings in her own home before facing the world and doing the same there too and this is something I work toward every single day. I would like to share a cup of coffee with her and ask her how she overcame her struggles and the steps she took to emerge victorious.

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

I am actually a tomboy. I participated in almost every sport in school and represented KZN at the South African Girls Golf Championships at the age of 12.

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

Have fun! Life and time can sometimes get away from you. Don't rush to grow up, trust God, live in the moment and always remember to have fun.

**QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS**

**Describe yourself in three words:**

Resilient, bold, compassionate.

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

Seek progress, not perfection.

**Who's your favourite designer and why?**

Rich Mnisi is killing it for me at the moment!

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

Definitely handbags. I am the type of girl who just needs my cell phone in hand and a lip balm.

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

I am very sporty – it does not help that I am competitive too.

**What would be your dream holiday?**

On a tropical island where I can explore the town for its culture but wake up to serenity and a book.

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

The ability to heal.

**What are you reading?**

*Unfinished* by Priyanka Chopra Jonas

**What music are you listening to?**

An album called *Old Church Basement* by Elevation Worship and Maverick City

**What are your favourite TV shows?**

*Modern Family, Schitt's Creek and Kim's Convenience*

**What is your favourite meal?**

Crab curry

**Who is your celeb crush?**

Michael B Jordan

**What's your guilty pleasure?**

Ice cream at midnight

**Your social media tags:**

- Facebook: Lisanne Lazarus
- Instagram: @lisannelazaruss
- Twitter: @LazarusLisanne