

Thando Hopa reflects on a beauty revolution

By [Thando Hopa](#)

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For decades, mass media communicated a highly constructed image of beauty to its audiences. The result became quite remarkable - in that our popular culture demanded a standardisation of the human body and human beauty.



Arguably, the female body was the biggest casualty of the beauty construct. Media invented an image-obsessed society that tried to remake or unmake the existence of many women around the world – it dictated the metrics of womanly beauty and as a by-product, millions of women watched helplessly as their own appearance was depicted as a deviant of beauty.

Self-love as political warfare

Years passed, a resistance grew and progressed within pockets of the global community. Voices of dissent emerged as influencers, purpose brands, activists, thought leaders and self-possessed individuals sought to democratise the image of beauty and negotiate a new cultural identity. A revolution was emerging.

Self-love became an act of political warfare to take back one's power. Women were exploring the radical act of personal freedom, body confidence and agency. They were redefining an oppressive culture and cultivating a new cultural environment that was expansive, embracing, inclusive and diverse in nurture. This new cultural environment would not impose anonymity on their existence and would not sentence their bodies to a life long struggle of inadequacy, insecurity and criticism.



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Beauty Revolution Power Talks

This may offer a synopsis of my sentiments during one of the most significant cultural milestones in recent years, the

Beauty Revolution Festival 2019. I had the honour of facilitating the Power Talks that comprised of four panels which were progressed by Audi. The four panels were about enabling an important public platform where like-minded and influential young women could engage on topics around empowerment, diversity, entrepreneurship and inclusiveness – in line with the car manufacturer’s emphasis on driving meaningful progress in South Africa.

Audi, a progress-driven and innovative car manufacturer and Beauty Revolution, a humanising movement of beauty, both collaborated with one another to create the Power Talks - having one major component in common, a set of values that result in the collective advancement of our society.



In a space where a whirlwind of colour, vibrancy and expression brought life to the festival, the dominant component of the festival was the appreciation of women's voices and their experiences channelled through the Power Talks. The topics we navigated were The Business of Beauty, My Identity is Not a Trend, Living your Purpose and Body Positivity.

It was apparent that the image monopoly of beauty had historically wounded our collective self-image and inevitably our self-worth. This is why, the women I interviewed – who were mostly entrepreneurs – created inclusive social strategies through multidimensional representation in categories such as make-up, hair care lines, visual imagery, wellbeing, fitness, services rendered, storytelling and so on.

The panellists proved to be pioneers who found longevity in celebrating the varied existence of beauty embedded within the landscape of womankind. They found, within themselves, a revolution. They explored redemptive and empowering platforms that combated image related pressures through art, business, activism and other mediums that inform our popular culture.



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The Power Talks Progressed by Audi connected us to a shared vision, that we would never unlearn the fact that feeling beautiful is a birth right. We amassed as many women as possible – road-mapping a society that did not invalidate our walks of beauty due to race, age, shape, size or shade.

The revolution is spreading like wildfire but it does not present itself as a reversal of roles draped in separatist rhetoric, instead, it is a construction of progressive and inclusive values that could be applied to every kind of woman and girl child.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thando Hopa is a lawyer, an actress, an international model, diversity advocate, writer and most recently, the first woman with albinism ever to be represented on a *Vogue Magazine* cover worldwide. She was also the face of Audi's marketing campaign for the Audi Q2, titled #untaggable.

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