

Celebrating women of worth

 By Jainita Khatri

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National Women's Day in August gives us the opportunity to celebrate strong and worthy women. In this article, I look at outstanding women from diverse backgrounds that share characteristics which make them inspiring leaders. These common denominators include: living their truth, empowering other women, survival, breaking the rules and activism.



Image supplied.

1: Truth

“You will survive anything if you live your life from the point of view of truth.” Oprah Winfrey ”

Oprah built her mega-media empire on being curious, driven, communicative and honest. She's well known in South Africa for being the founder of The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. She started the school to “Create that experience that I felt for myself, that sense of wonder that somebody cared about me that didn't even know my name.” She's spent over \$140m on the leadership academy in the last decade.



Oprah's dream school opens

3 Jan 2007



From earning 50c an hour babysitting to becoming the first black woman billionaire in history, Oprah garners global respect. She's not always had it easy and many women can relate to her as she says, “My highest achievement: never shutting down my heart.” I particularly like her “What I know for sure” column, the content of which became a bestselling book.

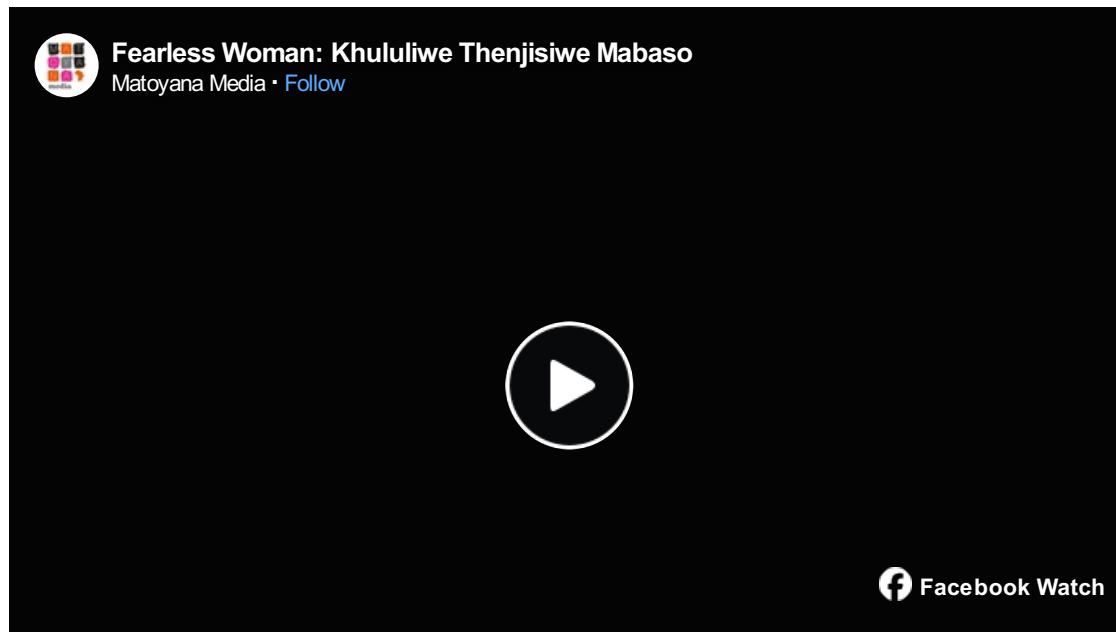
2: Empowering

“I have always wanted to start a digital channel that empowers people to create, act, become entrepreneurs or the best

version of themselves.” Nokwazi Mzobe, founder of Matoyana Media ”

Inspired by Shonda Rhimes’s book *Year of Yes*, South African author and founder of Matoyana Business Solutions, Nokwazi Mzobe (in discussion with a close group of friends) decided to focus on a word to live by in 2018. The word she chose was *fearless*. This has led to the start of Matoyana Media; an offshoot of Nokwazi’s consulting business.

Matoyana Media launched in August 2018 with a digital campaign called *Fearless Woman*, featuring one video interview a day with an awesome, courageous South African woman. The interviews show women who are doing amazing things and finding ways to overcome their daily fears. Nokwazi’s motivation is that by sharing women’s stories others will be inspired to act and not let fear hold them back from their potential and living their best lives.



3: Survival

“ “Nobody talks about entrepreneurship as a survival, but that’s exactly what it is and what nurtures creative thinking.”

Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop ”

Anita Roddick will always have a special place in my realm of inspirational women. She founded The Body Shop back in 1976 and can be seen as the pioneer of ethical consumerism; with a cosmetics brand committed to providing people with natural and ethically produced products. She was also a human rights activist, environmental campaigner and had a knack for telling it like it is. In this candid [interview](#) she talks about the difference between men and women and how they are perceived in business:

“Until we stop measuring men or women as an entity of production, and start to measure people for the production of the human spirit, of which the family is important, we’re always going to have this sacrifice.”

She said this in 2003 and things have changed, but perhaps not as much as they should have. Her book *Body and Soul* is still worth reading for any woman wanting to create a “livelihood” rather than a “business.”

4: Activism

“ “The rise of a female has a really loud bang.” Nomzamo Mbatha ”

As well as being an award-winning actress, a representative for Puma SA and the face of Neutrogena, South Africa’s Nomzamo Mbatha is also the ambassador for the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC).



Leigh Andrews 14 Dec 2016



In keeping with her humanitarian work, she's been a spokesperson for The Lighthouse Foundation, which helps treat people dealing with suicide or battling with mental illness. Nomzamo's Ground Six Productions also gives back to charities.

Voted as one of [Forbes Africa Under 30 Creatives](#), her star is on the rise, see her on Cosmopolitan #TheActivismIssue's August cover. In a TED Talk, Nomzamo explains that she supports refugees because she can be seen as one too. It's refreshing to see a local celebrity using her talent for so much more than the limelight; I look forward to watching her rise.

5: Break the rules

“ *“The more we can break the rules, the better off we're going to be.”* Indra Nooyi ”

Indian-American business executive, Indra Nooyi, was the chairwoman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo, the second largest food and beverage business in the world. After being the company's top chief for 12 years and having been with the company for 24 years, Indra will step down on 3 October 2018. “As CEO, Nooyi grew revenue more than 80%, outperforming our peers and adding a new billion-dollar brand almost every other year,” said [PepsiCo board member Ian Cook](#) the news of her stepping down was released.



PepsiCo's first female CEO steps down after 12 years at the helm

7 Aug 2018



How did Indra break the rules? She grew up in a socially conservative Indian city but [climbed trees and played in a rock band](#). She continued to challenge the cultural, societal and gender norms of the day and went on to become the [second](#) on Forbes' list of Most Powerful Women in Business in 2017. She has many wise words to live by, but this quote particularly resonates with me, being in the marketing business:

“Every morning you've got to wake up with a healthy fear that the world is changing, and a conviction that, to win, you have to change faster and be more agile than anyone else.”

6: Just plain human

“ *"Human beings are not like machines. Downtime is a feature. Taking time for a digital detox is essential."* Arianna Huffington ”

Did you know Arianna Huffington, as well as being the co-founder of Huffington Post, is a composer, songwriter and biographer of Maria Callas and Pablo Picasso? There's a lot to respect right there, but her most groundbreaking message to women was encompassed in her book *Thrive* and now her start-up [Thrive Global](#), dedicated to reducing stress and improving wellness.



Huffington Post founder leaves for wellness startup

16 Aug 2016



Arianna and Thrive Global are working to revolutionise thinking and behaviour in terms of the culture of business (and burn out), lack of sleep, addiction to technology and more. She encourages us to turn off our laptops, switch off our smartphones and take a much-needed digital detox.

ABOUT JAINITA KHATRI

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