

Publicist Bonnie Meslane launches digital magazine

By  Karabo Ledwaba

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Azania Public founder Bonnie Meslane has fulfilled a lifelong dream to launch her own lifestyle magazine *Nounouche*. The magazine revealed its first digital cover on Women's Day with lifestyle content creator Mhlali Ndamase as the muse.



Image supplied.

■ How did you become a publicist?

I have been a publicist for over eight years now, I started in 2013 at Soulistic Music working for Black Coffee. I was working as a writer at *Jucy Africa* when I landed my PR job and I fell in love with it. I love working with people, so my job was never a difficult task.

'I used to write beautiful music stories about everyone including Black Coffee, I then joined his company and I was there for two years and after that, I joined Total Exposure in Milpark, and worked on a number of exciting projects. I started my company Azania Public in 2017 with only three artist clients and now we are a team of seven.

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■ **How did the magazine come about and what inspired it?**

The magazine is a long-life dream of mine and seeing it received so well is beyond me. I collected plenty magazines growing up, loved reading and my world was in colour because of the magazines I loved and bought. My stepmother played a huge role, she also loved magazines, we had the latest issues of every lifestyle magazine at home. When I left Jucy Africa, I wanted to start my own but the timing was not right.

One of my best friends Tamara Leidenberg and I wanted to start a fashion and media company and we were going to start with fashion but things took too long. But I thought the magazine would be best to start with, and I started working on the look and feel, engaged my best weapon Herbert Chaunzwa to develop the site and create graphics, and that was the birth of *Nounouche*. We are a daily publication with monthly magazine covers on various themes. I am very passionate about magazines and the publishing industry and I wanted my contribution to make sense, be impactful not just in South Africa but abroad too. *Nounouche* is my first love, I see myself moving away from PR to focus on it full time.

■ **What have been the challenges with launching a digital magazine?**

Managing a team of creatives is stressful but we are all clear on deliverables and that should ensure a smooth delivery of issues. Funding is also a big challenge, we are a startup and financing a magazine from our pockets is difficult.



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■ **What do you envision for the future for the magazine and your PR career?**

The magazine is going international, we have plans to have international stars as collaborators. We already have the Francophone countries subscribed and sending us DMs on how they can be part of this magazine, and that is because of the name.

Nounouche is French and that was also very intentional. We are going to deliver excellent work with the magazine, I have an amazing team, the most creative minds contributing for us. Azania Public is growing and I am blessed to see it grow beyond what I imagined. We want to strengthen our global footprint this year and beyond. We have been lucky to work with big names in entertainment, from Lagos to North America and Germany. It's all the way up from here.

■ **Why is it important for women to own media publications?**

We get to tell our own stories without censorship and erasure by men. We also get to create a community of safety, love and giving to each other in the stories we share and tell on these platforms. It is important for women to have a voice in the media by owning platforms because men already tell us what they think of us and how they prefer us to be, now we get to define for ourselves, who we choose to be and how we want to be perceived. There is power in owning your story and we are here to remind women that may think they may have lost their power, that they can still reclaim it.

■ **Who are the women who have inspired you over the years?**

I have looked up to women such as Nzinga Qunta, she gave me my first shot in this industry. Zodwa Kumalo-Valentine who is a powerhouse, Basetsana Khumalo, Sbu Mpungose, KG Moeketsi, Azania Mosaka and Oprah.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SIVag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at karabo@bizcommunity.com

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