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**Beauty is
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yourself in the
present**
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- Thando Hopa



Credits: Fabrostyling Studio
wardrobe by Fabrosandz

Redefining Beauty, Power, and Purpose

In an industry where beauty is often narrowly defined, Thando Hopa has carved a space for herself—not just as a model but as an activist, a storyteller, and a legal professional who brings depth and purpose to every step of her journey.

Born in Sebokeng and raised in Lenasia South, Thando had a strong, loving family with her parents, two older siblings, and a grandmother who played a big role in her childhood. Her family's support shaped her self-confidence, and her grandmother's songs and stories gave her a sense of heritage that Thando now passes on to her own daughter.

At 35, Thando stands as a multifaceted inspiration, challenging stereotypes and reshaping perceptions of albinism, African identity, and womanhood.

FROM COURTROOMS TO CAMPAIGNS

Thando started her career as a prosecutor, specializing in cases of child abuse and sexual offenses. Her focus was on helping people find justice, but she was soon scouted to become a model, something she had never planned. As she navigated both careers, she discovered that modelling could offer a new way to advocate for people with albinism, who are often underrepresented or misunderstood.

The shift to modelling wasn't without struggle. Thando worked to redefine the narrative around albinism, challenging stereotypes and assumptions. "Our identities are multifaceted," she says, adding that she continues to seek projects that honour those layers of her identity.





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HER CHILDHOOD AND EARLY CHALLENGES

Though her early years were blissful, her first day of school marked a painful introduction to prejudice. "I thought the discrimination was because I wore a blue polka-dot dress instead of a school uniform," she recounts. Over time, she understood the true nature of this "difference" and adapted, developing resilience that would shape her journey.

A VOICE FOR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Growing up, Thando knew only a few people with albinism in the media, like musician Salif Keita. She felt that albinism was often spoken about in heavy, negative ways, so she decided to bring positive representation through her modelling work. Thando began to intentionally work on campaigns that celebrated her African roots, her identity as a woman, and her heritage. She wanted to show the world that albinism doesn't define a person's whole story; instead, it's just one part of their rich, multi-layered identity.

Thando's dedication led to meaningful opportunities, such as working on a United Nations action plan for people with albinism. This experience opened doors to larger platforms where she could share her message of diversity and inclusion.

Her experiences have taught her the value of building a support network or "tribe," as she calls it. "Whenever I feel not strong enough, my tribe helps me build perspective," she shares. This network empowers her, offering a safe haven amidst the challenges of her high-profile work.

REDEFINING BEAUTY AND SELF-LOVE

Thando's concept of beauty has evolved through each phase of her life. "Beauty is celebrating yourself in the present," she affirms.

She admits to battling societal beauty standards and facing challenges, such as post-partum acne. "I was always looking back or forward, trying to manage something that denied me the present moment," she says. Today, she champions the idea of owning one's beauty hour by hour, a profound shift that has empowered her to embrace her true self.

BALANCING AMBITIONS AND FAMILY LIFE

As a mother and an MBA student, Thando's life is a delicate balance of ambition and family responsibilities. She credits her partner, her nanny, and her extended family for the support that grounds her. "My village is what helps me do everything," she emphasizes, advocating for the importance of community in raising children. Thando's journey is a testament to the idea that family planning is not just financial; it's also about building a reliable support system.

OWNING HER POWER

Thando's path has taken her to places she never imagined, from courtrooms to global campaigns. She has used her platform to speak out about albinism and advocate for diversity. As she says, "As you move up, you need to strategize on how to use your voice effectively." Through her activism, she wants people to see the value in each other's unique stories and identities.

Thando Hopa's life reflects the beauty of resilience, the strength in vulnerability, and the impact of authenticity. Whether advocating for albinism, embracing motherhood, or breaking stereotypes in beauty and fashion, she embodies the power of embracing one's whole self. Thando's voice reminds us all that beauty and strength are about being present, owning one's journey, and creating spaces that reflect our fullest, truest selves.

