

# SHINE

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The story  
of Zinhle  
Dlamini

It's every young girls' classic dream, to become the dynamo of the corporate world. Zinhle Dlamini is a young aspiring lady who shows dedication and passion in her craft. A young lady who account to exhibit excellency in all she does. She is amongst the children under the care of a global organization called Voices for Africa-Swaziland. This is her story.

I'm a girl who grew up in a small town called Nhlngano in Swaziland with my parents. At an early age, the smell of absolute poverty filled my world and threatened my existence, pulling down those I call mom and dad unworthy of parenthood and casting doubt on their sense of citizenship.

Life was great as a toddler, at least that's what I believed until I saw how my parents especially my mom struggled to raise me as the only child at that time since she was self-employed. We lived in backrooms of people and they used to kick us out because my mom couldn't afford paying rent. She did all she could as a mom to give me the best, more than what she had as a child. Our mode of survival was making curtains/ linen in trying to make a few bucks and put bread in the table while my dad went on with his ways. . As young as I

was, I learnt how to use my hands to craft something and I told myself that I'm going to rise into greater heights and I won't let poverty dictate my life.

Growing up in such condition(s) helped me observe with a brilliant sense of my femininity that women are stronger than men. I say this because for every man I can positively look up to, my strength emanates from the strength of a woman.



I am talking about my mom, my aunt and

the queen my grandmother. During my high school days, I grew up under my grandparents' wings who taught me that as a woman you are the Maleficent of this

world. On a sad note, in 2007 my grandfather passed away and my life was in a stand still because he was the pillar of my strength. Many thoughts ran my mind at that time, thinking of who was going to pay for my school fees because he used to help my mom out. I didn't know how to process the feelings of guilt, anger or bitterness but my mom told me that everything that happens, happens for a reason. She told me that the only way to reach my full potential is to free myself from the past and like Tupac the US musician says in one of his songs "Life goes on". However, one out of many best memories I will ever share with my grandfather is when I used to read the Bible for him every Sunday.

In a class of 2011 at Mater Dolorosa High School, I learnt that in life to have more, I must first become more. I learned that it's not about looking for great positions that really matters, but rather becoming great. When you are great, great positions will come looking for you because getting into a great position while you are not great will only expose your inefficiencies. It is just like the saying "Boys are born but men are made". This means that when a boy refuses to be made a man, he will remain a boy even at the age of 60 and bear in mind that we do have lots of old boys and girls in our society.

**'Getting into great positions while you are not great will only expose your inefficiencies'**

In 2012, I couldn't go to any university because who was going to pay for my tuition fees since I lost my grandfather. Days went by, weeks, months and I started getting worried as the year was approaching to the end because I couldn't live with the thought of myself spending another year at home doing nothing. I remember getting excited every time I received a mail but only to find that I was rejected by the universities I applied to. Nevertheless, I never gave up on sending those application forms to different universities because I didn't want history to repeat itself. I never dropped that pen.

However, just when I was about to give up and consider myself working at a factory \*not that I look down on anyone who works there, I received a mail and I remember I wasn't excited to open it. I kept it for days in a cookie jar and I didn't have the strength to face the 'rejection' word again. My mom few days later convinced me to open it so I know where I stand and finally I opened it. I couldn't believe I was accepted at the Vaal University of Technology, I screamed my lungs out, excitement filled my eyes and led me and my mom emotional because I couldn't believe that FINALLY...FINALLY my prayers were answered. However even

though I was excited the thought of not knowing who was going to pay for my fees couldn't rest with me.

Luckily, my grandmother after many times of applying for compensation from government she was compensated pension money (money the government granted her after my grandfather's death) and she vouched to pay for my tuition fees at the university. I couldn't thank her enough and I made a promise to myself that I have to make the best out of this opportunity that has been given to me because it is a privilege denied to many.

On a sad note, my grandmother towards the end of my first year in university I could see that she was struggling with my tuition fees and couldn't help but wonder what she was going to do. She said to me "I won't let you drop out of varsity not when I'm still alive". And I asked her "What are you going to do?" She told me God has a plan. You know when they say you are blessed and highly favoured, that's my definition because through all the hardships that I faced with my family all these years, Voices for Africa came to my rescue and offered to enlarge its hand to me by offering to pay for my tuition fees. I couldn't be happy in my life as I was when I received the news. This proves that God is there and He surely thinks of each one of us every day. Like He said in His word in Hebrews that "I will never leave nor forsake you".

Recently, I took a walk of pride on that graduation stage and the only words that seem to be coming out of my mouth every time are "THANK YOU". I take pride in myself because I know that I have broken the generation curse and became the first graduate in my family. It is truly an honour and a blessing to hold such a big achievement in my life and like I always tell myself everyday "it does not stop here African child, global frontiers are waiting for me to break them, don't give up".

### **'Everything that's huge was once nothing'**

I associate my life with the emergence of mountains from ancient years. I love mountains. I love how they form over time from flat land and leisurely erupt to become symbols of vigour. I love how the journey to the top of the mountain heaves with lessons. Each one prepares me for the next. The mountain is a constant reminder of how much life can be - be it in a marketing field, tennis court or in front of a notepad; that everything that's huge was once nothing.

However, there are also things about mountains that trouble me. I hate how once you have reached the top, you have to freeze your ass off, making it hard for you to enjoy your achievement. Sometimes its how they look that bugs me; the asymmetrical pimples that budge randomly. I

also hate mountains because they hide the sun. When things don't work out Sometimes, as if it's a downfall, I always remember my very volatile relationship with mountains. How as much as I love them, not all their features tickle my fancy. In addition, just because there are things I don't like about mountains, it doesn't mean there aren't many people who love those very things.

### TO MY MOTHER

You are the centre of my existence, the efforts you made to me growing up give a life not even parents who work together could. How did you do it? Where did you

get the strength? The investment you make to me and my siblings stand when your socks were probably slipping in your shoes is a testament of the glow of being a mother. You know I need food, clothes, love. Your time to enjoy the fruits of your labour, to smell the rose and exhale fresh breeze has come. You had times were you asked yourself how 'I breathe' but God being God you still breathe. Mother, you sing that tune in me that makes me frown but really makes my heart smile because after all that you've been through, you still find a reason to be happy. I require nothing but your smile. Mother, thank you.



**'I require nothing but a smile'**

### TO MY GRANDMOTHER

You have wisdom beyond what human nature can comprehend. You are an ideal woman that is fierce and only sees a glass full when it is half-empty. Generations perhaps have changed but the values that you instilled in me will never fade. Your adaptation is evidence that you place yourself in the present. You know more about popular culture than even your daughter does, all in an attempt to teach your children and grandchildren. The matriarch is what I call you. The centre of my world is who you are and as long as you hold, everything is just as it should be and more.

## TO VOICES FOR AFRICA

**'What makes humanity  
fascinating is when  
spirits collaborate to  
define what life is'**

They say family is not only the one you share the same blood with but one you have a deep connection with. You guys are my rock. You could have chosen anyone but instead chose me, you showed love that was stronger than the circumstance. I say to myself, we are all born under diverse circumstances, on different parts of the world, raised by different people and fed many dissimilar ideologies. What makes humanity fascinating to me is when spirits collaborate to define what life really is all about. The magic is how our differences challenge us into seeing things differently not to turn the next person over, but to affirm the reasoning behind your choice. Thank you.

## TO ZODWA

I do not have the right words to say to you. You are just a wonder. We are so many children for Voices for Africa under your care but you care for us all without a problem. I then agree with our sister Gcebile who calls us her brothers and sisters from her mom but do not stay at the same home with you. How can you know and care for us all if we are not your chil-

dren. You are a mom, a granny and whatever we can think of. May God protect you for us and give you power everyday. We need you and love you. God bless you our mom and granny.

## TO SPARKLE GIRLS

To be the best you can be you have to know your true self. To do this, it is important to define your value systems:

- What do you believe in?
- What excites you?
- How do you want other people to perceive you?

Your thoughts and convictions become your reality; the more highly you rate yourself, the more positive your reality becomes. Attach meaning to experiences by taking on a "producer role." "As a producer you can look at a situation more objectively because you can act as an outsider and can see the picture as a whole." Therefore, I say to you it is possible to achieve anything in life so long you put your mind to it and not even the sky is a limit.

You are beautiful and wonderful in your uniqueness. From today on, I beg you to stop being hard on yourself because of what others think of you. Just love yourself for who you are right now; it is not that difficult. Patience and time are the only determinants of success and your shine will come in due time, as I always say "don't let anyone ever dull your sparkle".