

FELICIA MABUZA-SUTTLE

A woman all South Africans look up to for her innovation and success, Felicia is a true inspiration.

A lot positive and negative things have been said about her, but one fact remains – Felicia dared to dream. Amongst many other things, she is the President of the SA Tourism USA. After being Lux's first black model and hosting her own talk show, she has undoubtedly paved the way for many black people.

Why did you relocate to the USA? "There is pain with change and there is pain with remaining the same, choose the one that moves you forward". I read this quote and realised change is good if you want to progress in life. It was time for change; time for a new challenge. I also wanted to be close to my family, after 12 years away from them.

What are some of the challenges that you face as the President of SA Tourism USA? The challenge is to change the negative images of doom, devastation, disaster and death that are portrayed about Africa on American television. Most Americans cannot differentiate that Africa has 53 countries. Sharing our culture and music also works well. We have brought great South African artists to perform here.

You never settle – it's almost like you're constantly looking for more challenges. Why?

Have you always been like that? I am a restless person. I pursue my dreams with relentless determination and vengeance. I set goals for myself and accomplish them. I wanted to have a PhD and I do. I wanted to use television to change misperceptions and to bring black and white together, and I have accomplished that with my show in South Africa and America. I have always wanted to be an entrepreneur and I am dabbling in investment, real estate and the retail, automobile and hospitality industries.

You've said that the quote 'We must be the change we want to see in the world' is your favourite. What does it mean to you? Mahatma Gandhi's quote demonstrates that actions speak louder than words. It's about taking a position and dealing with the consequences, as long as it is all towards creating a better society. It is about exercising what we preach as Africans – Ubuntu: The spirit of sharing and uplifting others for the good of creating a better society.

Tell me about being Lux's first black model. It gave me the confidence to know that my dream to become somebody one day was possible and it positioned me as a role model at a very early age. It built my self-confidence and affirmed that a girl from the dusty

streets of Soweto can represent a brand like Lux.

When you started the Felicia Show, a lot of media people accused you of trying to be like Oprah. How did you manage to keep your head high in spite of all the criticisms?

There is something you cannot teach and that's passion. I have immeasurable passion for my people and my country. Through television, which is what I studied and taught here in America, I believed I could make a difference and we did. Even the sceptics will accept that.

Criticism is good because it's a barometer that indicates you are doing what others are afraid to do.

The Oprah factor, I love it. It meant that this girl from Soweto can be compared to a billionaire; it meant that I have the potential to become a billionaire and I am aspiring to become just that soon. I am a South African original.

What's the one thing that you still want to achieve?

To play a role in achieving peace in our society using all mediums that I understand: television, public speaking, you name it. God has blessed me materially, spiritually and health-wise, so what more can I ask for? *

BY BONGA PERCY VILAKAZI

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