

GETRUDE MATSHE

THERE'S A VERY THIN VEIL BETWEEN US AND WHAT WE WANT

by Eve Menezes Cunningham

Getrude Matshe was named after a rebellious grandmother who had been taken away from her parents to be raised by white nuns in an orphanage. This was quite common at the time and must have been heartbreaking.

But this little girl, who didn't know anything about her heritage or even her African name, decided to change the new one: Getrude became Get Rude and no amount of punishment would get her to change back.

Getrude Matshe has inherited this audacity and spirit. In Zimbabwe, where she was born and raised, the average life expectancy for a woman is 34. But now she's made such a success of her life, she is determined to do whatever she can to help her country heal.

Getrude says that although she is not the typical African woman, her life purpose is to give a voice to African women. She says, "Africa is a hard continent to live on but it prepares you to live anywhere."

She and her husband grew desperate to leave their home and she had several Batik workshops lined up to earn good money in the US. She planned to go ahead with her children and would send for her husband when she'd saved enough for his fare.

But when they changed planes in Johannesburg, an administrative error on one of her children's visas led to them being sent back to Zimbabwe. Their error, she was told, would cost her \$6million to correct. And when they tried to get a refund on the unused tickets to America, she was told that this would be impossible.

So her spirits were quite low. The amazing life she'd been on the verge of had been taken away. But then 9/11 happened and Getrude realised that, based on where her workshops would have taken place and



the timings, she'd almost certainly have been killed.

Later, she says, she and her husband took another gamble and put their life savings into a home in New Orleans. When this was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, Getrude got the message that she wasn't meant to live in America.

Things started changing for her. That day, Getrude had read a quote: "If a man kicks you in the butt, let it push you towards your goal." At this point, a cousin who was in New Zealand tracked her down via the internet and sent her an email inviting her to move there. So Getrude went ahead with the kids planning to send for her husband as soon as possible.

She and her kids were sleeping on her cousin's floor and she had no idea how to get a job, home and daycare. One evening, Getrude

found herself in an exclusive Wellington neighbourhood. Looking in an estate agent's window she dreamed about living there and wished she could afford it. Then she met a woman who said that she knew of a place, in that area, that might be perfect for her. She even got the rent reduced until she could find work.

So Getrude moved into a beautiful neighbourhood that was technically way out of her price range. Her new friend told the people living on the street that any household items would be appreciated. Getrude says, "I found everything I needed on my doorstep."

Soon, her home was fully furnished. It was as if the second she realised she needed something, from a table to blankets, a kindly neighbour would appear with the item she had

just thought of.

This all sounds like a fairy tale but Getrude's resourceful attitude is what has enabled her to take advantage of every opportunity. One evening, she was listening to film director Peter Jackson giving a speech. When question time came around, the fan of his earlier Lord of the Rings asked how she could get a part in his forthcoming remake of King Kong.

This led to her being asked if she knew of several hundred Africans in New Zealand who might like to be extras. Instead of gasping, "Oh, no, I just wanted a little part for me. I don't know anything about hiring film extras" Getrude decided to try.

She ended up trawling the streets and buses of New Zealand taking strangers' pictures and building up an agency for film extras. Having provided all these extras, she was again disappointed to be told that she was too big to be one herself. But then she got a small role as a servant instead.

Getrude had continued creating her beautiful Batik designs but felt disheartened that the New Zealand market was not interested in her African zebras and giraffes. Then she had a dream in which Grandmother Getrude was yelling at her. In English. Granddaughter Getrude knew she was really impatient. When she woke up, she still didn't understand the message about "breaking the problem into little pieces." But within three months she'd sold 1000 cushions that she'd made from the previously unwelcome material.

Getrude and her husband's families alone have 19 AIDs orphans. With 17 million in Africa, she wants to help "give this generation a hand up. When you give someone a handout you're not empowering them, you're disenfranchising them. Somewhere in our history, someone told us we were poor and we believed it. But Africa is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of gold and oil. We need to break the cycle."

So she's written a book about her journey, *Born on the Continent: Ubuntu*. The profits are going into a charity, the Africa Alive Foundation, she's launching. "Ubuntu" means "I would not be human unless

you were human acknowledging my humanity".

Getrude is applying the same visualisation techniques she's used to lift herself out of poverty to launch this charity. To raise awareness, she's been speaking internationally and has already seen several amazing coincidences. One example was visiting LA and being asked by a friend to come to church. She was about to say, "I've not been in 18 years – I'm not a Christian" but she heard an inner prompt telling her "Getrude, you need to pray."

So she went.

And it turned out to be the Reverend Michael Beckwith's church with a congregation of 10,000. She recognised him from *The Secret* and tried to get a meeting with him to talk about her charity. Instead, he offered her the floor so she could talk directly. Cheques are still pouring in.

Getrude would love to meet Oprah Winfrey. She has been visualising this friendly chat with the help of a picture of Oprah and her best friend Gayle King (Editor at *Large of O Magazine*). When Getrude realised she needed to say when she wanted to meet Oprah by, she added

a date to the picture.

Getrude's currently writing a screenplay and mentally "cast" Denzel Washington in her husband's role. By another coincidence, her son got a part in a real film as Denzel Washington's son. So she asked her son to ask Denzel if he remembered her. She'd been an extra on *Cry Freedom* for two weeks as a 19 year old in South Africa. He did and has agreed to be in her film pro bono if he can make his



schedule work.

Naturally, Getrude is already practicing her Oscar acceptance speeches (she's after several awards). To make this feel more real, she's using some fake Oscars she picked up in LA. She says, "My father taught me how to dream. There's a very thin veil between us and what we want. Once you start refining your vision, it's like taking blinkers off."

"It starts in the mind by you seeing it in pictures. Then you have to imagine yourself already having it." Getrude says that writing her screenplay "seemed impossible". Now she has "a movie producer financing the movie and mentors to help write the script coming to me everyday. When I started, I just knew I wanted it so badly. I had no idea how to do it. Then I said it out loud, wrote it down in my book and the rest happened with no effort at all."

"When you live life on the vibrational level, where you can feel and see your dreams unfolding, things just happen to you. What you want just comes to you through a series of amazing coincidences. It's magical." ●

To buy Getrude's book, visit <http://www.bornonthecontinent.com/>

**Everything you want
in life is already here**