

# The Secret Of Our Success

Getrude Matshe knows better than most that every chance in life should be grabbed with both hands. Her uplifting spirit and determination have enabled her to achieve her dreams

**B**eing named after my grandmother has given me the unusual sounding Getrude.

She rebelliously dropped the r in Gertrude to become Get Rude.

In Zimbabwe, where I was born and raised, the life expectancy for a woman is 32 years. Just being alive beyond that is a blessing. My grandmother's free spirit has been passed on to me and has shaped the course of my life.

My parents were determined to send my siblings and me to private school. To afford this, we all worked from the age of 6. I remember having just one uniform which was lovingly washed and ironed in time for

me going to school the next day.

When I grew up, got married and had children of my own, my husband and I were desperate to leave Zimbabwe. In 2001, it was all set up that I would go to America and send for him as soon as I could, but when my children and I were en route, an administrative error meant that we were turned back. To correct the "error", I was asked to pay 6 million Zimbabwe dollars. I was devastated. How could I earn that kind of money if I couldn't get to the US? And now we had lost our life savings.

I had several batik workshops lined up in New York, which would have been very lucrative. But then, on September 11, New York was attacked. My workshops would have been right by the World Trade Center. If all had gone according to plan, I'd almost certainly have been killed. Our frustration turned to absolute relief.

Luckily, as one plan fell through, another one came together. I had a cousin in New Zealand who suddenly tracked me down through the internet. She invited me to come and stay with her. So I made the

arrangements and my children and I slept on her floor until I found our own place and work.

While my American plans had been a struggle, New Zealand was much easier and I soon had enough money to send for my husband.

Hearing that the film director Peter Jackson, fresh from the success of *Lord of the Rings*, was going to be speaking at a local event, I went to listen. When it was time for questions, I asked him how I could get a part in his upcoming *King Kong* remake, as I had already been an extra in *Cry Freedom*, starring Denzel Washington, when I was just nineteen.

He told me that he needed

Peter more than 400 potential extras. Luckily, I landed a small speaking rôle in the film as well.

I'm now writing a screenplay of my life and had mentally "cast" Denzel Washington to play my husband. When my son coincidentally got a part in a film playing Denzel's son, I asked him to ask Denzel if he remembered me from *Cry*

## I'm already practising my Oscar acceptance speech for Best Screenplay... amongst others

more than 300 African extras and asked if I could find them. I nearly said, "Oh, I don't know anything about hiring film extras. I just thought I'd like to be one myself," but instead, I decided to try to find them for his film for a challenge.

So I started taking photos of strangers on buses and, with the help of friends and friends of friends, I was able to offer

*Freedom*. He remembered and has actually agreed to be in my film if he can make his schedule work.

**V**isualisation has really helped me focus on how I want my life to be, and has been so successful up to now that I'm already practising my Oscar acceptance speech for Best Screenplay... and several



A happy ending for Getrude





The whole of the Matshe family have benefited from Getrude's positive outlook

other categories. When I visited LA recently, I bought several fake Oscars and I hold them when I visualise to make it feel more real and attainable.

Thoughts become things. The fact that you can think about something or imagine what you want means you have the ability to have it. It starts in the mind. You see it in pictures. Then you have to imagine yourself already having it.

Although writing my screenplay felt impossible at first, I'm determined to make it happen. This belief and trust has miraculously led to a producer financing the movie. And mentors to help write the script are coming to me every day. 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.

I credit my husband with much of my success. Just as I am not the typical African woman, he is not the typical man. If he was, he wouldn't be both mother and father to the children while I fly all over the world on business.

Africa is a hard continent to live in but it prepares you to live anywhere. We can't change anything about our pasts – wherever we've grown up and whatever we've had to deal with. But we can change the way we think about things and shape the future.



## Make your own dreams come true

In your own life, who supports you? If you can't think of someone who believes in you and encourages you to pursue your dreams, make a decision to widen your circle. Everyone can do more with support than they can alone. Much of Getrude's success has been down to her willingness to accept help from other people. the next time you automatically start

rejecting someone's offer of help, pause and think about accepting it instead. It could make all the difference.

- To buy Getrude's book *Born on the Continent*, please visit [www.bornonthecontinent.com](http://www.bornonthecontinent.com). She is donating the profits to a charity she's launching: The Africa Alive Foundation.
- For free confidence coaching tips, why not visit [www.applecoaching.com](http://www.applecoaching.com)