Surround yourself with people who support your vision

By Juanita Pienaar

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Not only is Zaza Motha an award-winning journalist (Caxton Excellence Best Food Feature 2011) but she is also an award-winning entrepreneur (Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Award 2018) who recently made it onto the *Mail & Guardian's* list of the Top 200 Young South Africans (Business and Entrepreneurship).

Zaza Motha, founder and director of Pout Movement. Image supplied.

Motha is the founder and director of the Pout Movement. Pout (an acronym that stands for powerful, outstanding, unique and talented) is a social enterprise aimed at empowering young women to find solutions to their challenges and increase their human capital. Here, Motha goes into detail as to why she felt the need to start Pout, sharing a personal and emotional journey, and also talks about the specific challenges faced by many females in the workplace.

Tell us more about yourself, your business and how you came up with the idea for Pout.

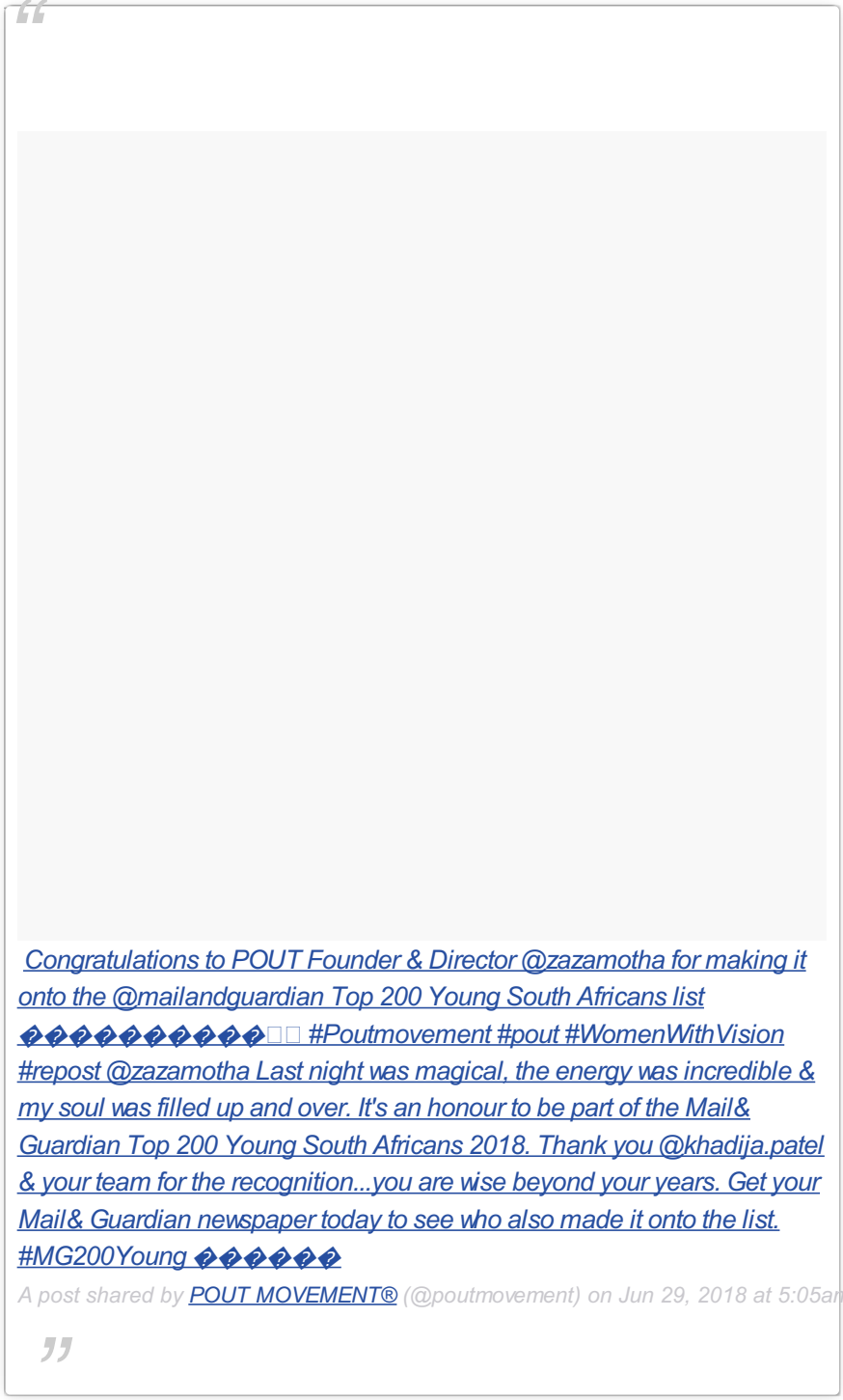
> *"I came up with Pout after I witnessed the death of my mother at the age of seven during Apartheid. She was killed by a stray bullet while she was on the phone. I later saw this on the news and I vowed that I would tell the world my story, as I felt a sense of injustice."*

After my mom's death, my father was left to raise six children by himself. We had to sell sweets and chips in order to get transport money to go to school and that is where my love for business began. I also wrote a lot about my pain while I was growing up, expressing how the death of my mother affected me.

When I was 18 years old, I met my mentor Zeona Jacobs (who is the current director of marketing and corporate affairs at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange) who took me under her wing and introduced me to the world of women empowerment. I then studied journalism here in South Africa and overseas as I had a dream of starting my own media business and telling the world my story.

My journey through life, work experience and passion resulted in the creation of the Pout Movement. It is a space that I needed while growing up and using different tools, we equip young women through various information portals so they can find opportunities to better themselves and explore the world. Pout also shares their stories, as that in itself is a form of being validated.

- ***Absolutely amazing! Congratulations on making it onto the Mail & Guardian's Top 200 Young South Africans list. What does the recognition mean to you?***



It means that my dream was valid all along and my efforts are being seen and applauded. It was extremely encouraging to

be part of this dynamic group of young South Africans and it was a pat on the back, which illustrated that I am heading in the right direction.

> *"More than anything I want to build a legacy business that will create a positive impact in society. I still have a long way to go, so this achievement fanned the passion that I already have because growing a business is like a marathon, so you need a lot of endurance."*

What is the hardest part of your job and what is the best part?

The difficult moments come when you feel like you are not making progress. When you are burning the midnight oil and working to ensure that the next step will take you to the next level. I have come to rely on the reason why I started on this journey and I often go back to it. The best part is impacting lives and providing hope and a paradigm shift for someone who needs it. I also love how creative I can be within Pout.

List a few of the specific challenges females face in the workplace and how can they overcome these?

- Being heard. We often have creative ideas that could contribute to the bottom line of a business or company. So these ideas can often be dismissed because 'that is not how we do things'. Sometimes asking questions and coming up with solutions which are outside the box can be shut down because you are supposed to know your place.

- One thing I have also noted is that women have a hard time of not being able to speak up for themselves. This could be out of fear or depending on how hostile an environment is, you could be blacklisted and thought of as a troublemaker. I have heard cases where some women literally cry at their desks because of how they are treated by their superiors with no real basis. I personally have never had this problem because I learned to speak up for myself from a young age and to stand my ground by producing quality work so that it can speak for itself.

Who are your female role models/business mentors – women you respect and admire?

These are women who have had a major impact on my life:

Zeona Jacobs, director of marketing and corporate affairs at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. I believe that she is a pioneer of women empowerment in this country. She introduced a concept in this country that empowered thousands of young girls. She basically put women empowerment on the map of mainstream media. When I first met her, she knew what to do and say to empower me according to what I told her. At some point, she even took me to one of her board meetings when I was 18. Basically, she made me realise that there is a seat for me at the table.

Nomonde Gongxeka, Seopa. She is an Icasa councillor and chair of the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) Advisory Council. She was instrumental when I made career decisions and would freely offer advice and encouragement in my decision making. She also recommended me to a programme: the Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa. After extensive interviews, I was chosen as Milead Fellow and part of 25 young women across the globe who demonstrated leadership and commitment in shaping Africa's future. I received training in Ghana and that moment shaped the way I look at our continent and the role that Pout can play in it.

Khanyi Dhlomo, founder and CEO of Ndalo Media. I had the honour of working for Khanyi and she didn't hold back in giving me advice on Pout and the different strategies I could try so that I could grow it. She leads by example and a true example of living your own brand. Having access to her and industry knowledge in the magazine space made me learn about things that I could never learn on my own.

There are other women who have contributed to my growth but these three stand out for me.

This Women's Month, what is your word of encouragement to aspiring women in business?

I love a quote that was recently posted on Pout Movement's social media accounts by PR guru and founder of African

Star Communications, Farah Fortune when she was talking about her business journey. She says that:

> *"I didn't knowit will take so long and I didn't knowit was going to be so hard and I was going to be so broke for so long... and that's the thing most entrepreneurs don't tell you."*

That quote struck a chord with me. Like I stated earlier, it is challenging when you don't see progress. To all the aspiring women in business, make sure you surround yourself with people who support your vision. Share very little time with people who are negative or naysayers. Get yourself a mentor so that when you feel that you are stuck, you can have someone with industry knowledge that can give you advice. Emotionally, don't stay in a dark place for too long, learn how to bounce back quickly because business will require that of you. Protect your headspace, because that is the engine of your business.

Any exciting future plans or events that you can tell us about?

I'm being booked for a lot of speaking engagements where I speak to corporates, communities or young people in business. We are also engaging a lot of brands and companies in the lead up to the launch of *Pout* magazine where we have come up with cost-effective and impactful ways of reaching the masses in townships and semi-urban places.

For more on these events, visit the Pout Movement website or follow Pout on the following social media platforms: Facebook; Twitter; Instagram. You can also follow Motha on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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