

Tendaiishe Chitima shares her passion for the creative arts



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

4 Aug 2021

Popularly known as Anesu on Netflix's Zimbabwean *Cook Off* film, Tendaiishe Chitima is a multitalented star who looks to take the world by storm with her extensive, diverse experience and skills in industries such as film and television, ICT, business and development.



Tendaiishe Chitima

■ ***Can you tell us a bit about yourself?***

I was born and raised in Zimbabwe. I am an actress, a business consultant, a singer, a songwriter and I love the arts. I am passionate about the merging of arts and commerce, business as well as development in the arts. I just love everything about arts in Africa and just seeing African stories being told. I would love to see authentic stories coming from Africa to international platforms, and I want to be part of those stories.

■ ***You've been described as a multitalented star. Could you share what talents you have?***

As I've said, I'm an actress, singer and songwriter, so those are some of the talents that I possess. I would also say I'm a great at organising, managing and facilitating things such as events or conversations, and also coordinating and leading projects.

■ ***How did you get into acting?***

It was a journey of discovery, really. I was passionate about literature in high school, but growing up I was very shy, so I never did drama in high school. I took a gap year straight after high school and during that year I worked in an arts festival called Harare International Arts Festival and that's where I fell in love with the arts. By the time I got to the University of Cape Town (UCT) to study journalism, I discovered that UCT offered drama, I then decided to take a class in drama and the rest is history. I fell in love with drama and never looked back!

■ ***You have a passion for creative arts. Tell us about your journey.***

I do have a passion for the creative arts. Firstly, being in South Africa has completely changed my life in a positive way.

Like I said, I firstly discovered drama and acting in South Africa at UCT and I always say that had I not studied in South Africa at UCT I probably wouldn't be an actress, because I don't know...I fell in love with it and to fall in love with such a craft, I think on African soil is so special because it just basically means I was learning mostly African stories, African ways of thinking, social issues within my own local community, within southern Africa and Africa as a whole and that was very special to me.

For me, South Africa holds a very special place in my heart because that's where my career was born. I later then found my agent who is South African and helped get a lot of experience and exposure.

■ ***As a Zimbabwean in South Africa. Have you faced any challenges in the industry? if so, how did you overcome them?***

Yes, I did face challenges, and they were just me being unable to understand or speak native languages and obviously first preference was given to the locals which is totally fair but overall, my experience in the industry has been extremely positive. The few challenges have made me realise that I need to be back home (Zimbabwe) and also build the industry here and that's how I ended up being on Netflix because I decided to look into Zimbabwean production. So, the challenges in SA for me were not as big as the opportunities, exposure and training that I found there.

How I overcame the challenges was just trying my best to be good, regardless of whether I could speak the languages or not. And also overcoming the challenges of the fear of coming back home, because the Zimbabwean industry is still growing, so overcoming that fear is what got me on *Cook Off*. I think it has been a really good learning journey that has given me success and it definitely hasn't been easy, but I've had a lot of failures and No's.

■ ***After your role in Cook Off, you became a Netflix star overnight. How has life been since then?***

I honestly wouldn't say that I became a Netflix star overnight. My life since I got into Netflix has been very exciting. I feel I got thrust into a season of transformation, transition, it's like I'm not who I used to be but I'm also not where I am going right? I'm in a space of transition, it has opened so many doors for me, and it's more about how I take on those opportunities that are coming my way. I'm so grateful, but it's also been a testing ground because I need to up my game since I am now playing with the big dogs!

■ ***Can you comment on the transformation (or lack of) of how women are represented in the creative industries?***

To be fair, in terms of representation, definitely there is a bit of progress in terms of inclusivity. There are a lot more of women directors coming up in Hollywood and in different spaces. I think, in Africa there is still more room for major improvement, but there are opportunities now for women to take up space.

Again, it goes back to the issue of who holds the pen, who's writing the stories, who's producing the stories, who's directing the stories.

“ For us to tell authentic stories about women, sometimes we need those perspectives to be from women themselves. ”

How are we empowering women to tell the stories, to share their authentic selves in these films and on-screen? So, I think that that's the major issue that we need to resolve in Africa. Are women empowered to tell their stories? Is there room for them to tell their stories? Are they given the positions that help them assume the power to tell their stories? I see more opportunities are coming up, but there is still more to be done besides South Africa and Nigeria. I think there is room for improvement.

■ ***What more would you like to see happen in this industry?***

Oh my goodness, so much more! As an actor, I am looking forward to doing motion capture and I want to do sci-fi and

action movies. I guess the issue has always been resources, but I want to be in an industry in Africa where we have the resources to make big budget movies that are well written, acted, produced and directed that's where I want to go. To tell stories that shape our perceptions and image as Africans, who we are as people, stories that inspire us to be better and who we're meant to be. That's what I'm looking forward to.

■ ***What advice do you have to share with the future generation of Black female creatives like yourself?***

Don't be afraid to dream big. Don't be afraid to take risks. Don't be afraid to step out and be everything you want to be. You never know who will meet along the way who could propel you to where you want to go. You never know what opportunities will come up, but you have to believe in yourself and to believe in your dream and you have to work hard. It's unfortunate that black women sometimes have to work five times as hard but that is the portion that we have been given. So, we do it with grace and excellence until the battle is won.

■ ***As we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa. Do you have any words of encouragement for all the women out there?***

For Women's Month in South Africa, I would like to encourage all the women out there to continue to discover who they are. A lot of times, where find ourselves in life can literally stop us from discovering who we are and what we become or the purpose we are created for.

You find that sometimes mothers become so occupied with raising kids or if you're working then you become so occupied with work or now taking care of our families during Covid, but don't forget to take time to take care of yourself, to discover who you are, what you want in life and to live life to the fullest.

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