

Brave Decisions by Brave Women: Tumi Rabanye, strategic director, The Brave Group

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In this instalment of the "Brave Decisions by Brave Women" series, Tumi Rabanye, strategic director at The Brave Group talks to us about her journey and key moments in her life which led her to where she is today. With just over 16 years as a marketing communications strategist; courage, honesty and relentless passion for one's craft are just some of the qualities Tumi believes are necessary to truly becoming who you are, thus leaving a legacy and being truly unforgettable.

1. What does "being brave" mean to you?

Being brave to me is living in my truth with all the vulnerability that it comes with. One's truth by its very nature is not sanitised; it is asymmetrical, it comes with stains, blemishes and scars – but there's always a brilliant new way to adorn YOU; that's why the expression "in your full glory" exists! There's only one of YOU, so why not be the best or fullest version of YOU.

2. What is the first brave thing you remember ever doing?

I'd have to say the first brave thing I ever did was choosing to fully BE and LIVE as MYSELF from a young age.

I think for people in general – and certainly for women in particular – in a world organised in the interest of "the opposite", self-possession is often received as a form of protest. It's probably because somewhere someone is always expecting assimilation of you! Lol!

I often reflect on the stance of the Mandela daughters, after their mother's passing, where they refused to subscribe to a rivalrous comparison of their parents. It was really a refusal to assimilate to a heteronormative construct that "one is better than another..." that to be one thing, implies being better than another as opposed to complimentary. The audacity to fully be oneself is totally necessary because there's enough sun for all of us.

To have a comprehension of "how the world works"; its expectations of you, and to still make your choices consciously, matters. The real magic of that lies in how honouring yourself liberates you to fully contribute to your world. There's a freedom that comes with the decisions you make or how you dispense your energy in the various roles you play – in mothering, at work, in companionship. It's a thing!

3. What is the bravest career decision you have ever made? Why did you make it?

I'm not sure it was a decision to be honest; to me it was like choosing to breathe. I have the incredible fortune of doing for a living what is consistent with my nature and what I do for fun. I absolutely love thinking; I love exploring new ways of problem solving and I have a deep appreciation for the genesis of great ideas. That's essentially what strategic thinking as a discipline is about. In the context of an agency, a strategist facilitates ideation, then aggregates the lessons from the ones that have been executed and all the while building bridges through discourse. One is required to constantly feed their own mind in order to have a rich base from which to contribute. Given no brief, no salary, that's what I'd do anyway.

I suppose choosing to apply "my nature" in a radically changing industry, advertising and marketing communications is where the "brave decision" comes in. With all its challenges, including declining marketing budgets, I still choose to be here. Currently I do so because finally that era of true media and disciplinary convergence is happening thanks to digital



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disruption; which means there's a chance to learn and do something new! I LOVE THAT! In my discipline in particular, I hear a lot of fear mongering about how AI and technology could render us obsolete; on the contrary I am excited about the importance of humanity showing up, of passion and emotional intelligence taking centre stage as algorithms take care of the mechanics. I'm excited about being expected not only to use my mind but also my heart in decision making because no machine can make up for that human quality.

4. What are you doing to empower the next women who will be in your position one day?

I think empowering a woman should not be limited to the ones who will be in my position; I think that's only part of the job; one has to do more than that! I think availing oneself for conversation, connection and facilitation when called on is a necessity. I also think owning and narrating my truth is necessary, because somewhere out there may be a girl who needs to hear it. I have a mantra I live by, "things like this do happen to girls like me", meaning that I am not immune to the negative of the world; equally I am also profoundly worthy of its fortune. Either way, the dependency is on my mindset and spirit to recreate the patterns – I prefer the positives. So with that in mind, working from a place of authenticity is my first invitation.

Professionally, I see strategy as a brilliant way to enter the industry, so I see myself as tasked with the responsibility to invite and open the path for talent. What's magical about strategy is that it requires diverse levels of experience; some young and new, some mature and experienced. I'm just a curator in the range.

5. How do you intend on leaving your mark and becoming truly unforgettable?

I think my way is to definitely pour myself into the work and do the time! Working from a place of passion is half the fuel; doing that with focus and discipline, I think are the other parts. Over time one is able to look back and see the trail of achievements both large and small behind one.

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