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NEWS

Zimbabwe crowns first 'Miss Albino' in bid to tackle stigma

Zimbabwe has put on its first "Miss Albino" pageant in an effort to stamp out discrimination and stigma surrounding the condition. The 22-year-old winner says she wants to fight for the rights of children with albinism.



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Sithembiso Mutukura beat 12 other contestants to claim the crown at Zimbabwe's first-ever Miss Albinism beauty contest — an achievement she hopes will inspire others living with the rare disorder.

"We must continue to advocate for our rights and I hope my win will empower the girl child," the 22-year-old social work student said.

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Keywords [Zimbabwe](#), [Albinism](#), [discrimination](#), [Africa](#)

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"I have gone through a lot, but I want people living with albinism to be brave and persevere in life."

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During the event in Harare on Friday night, the contestants had to respond to questions on stage and model a range of gowns and traditional African robes. Mutukura was awarded US\$85 (almost €70) in prize money after being named winner.

Read more: [Mr. Albinism Kenya: 'Finally we achieved something'](#)



The 13 beauty pageant contestants strut their stuff on the catwalk

Going global?

Pageant organizer Brenda Mudzimu said a lack of funds had made it difficult to get the initiative off the ground. In the end, the contest only attracted one sponsor, but Mudzimu says she hopes to one day make the event international.

"This will be an annual event which will later be advanced to Miss Albinism Africa and Miss Albinism World because we want to reach all corners of the world," she said.

Read more: [Zambian albinos call for end to brutality](#)

In many African countries, people with albinism [routinely face discrimination and persecution](#) because of the way they look. The genetic disorder [prevents skin cells from producing melanin](#), resulting in abnormal pigmentation of the skin, hair, and eyes. People with the condition also suffer from vision problems and are susceptible to skin cancer.

"The pageant aims to instil confidence in girls living with albinism in Zimbabwe as well as reduce the stigma," Mudzimu said.

Read more: [Cameroonian albino fights prejudice with music](#)

Attacks and discrimination

Tapuwa Muchemwa, a Zimbabwean government representative who was the guest of honor at the pageant, said the country's leaders "strongly advocate that people with albinism deserve their right to life and security, and to be protected, as well as the right not to be subjected to torture and ill-

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treatment."

The rate of albinism in Africa is much higher than in other parts of the world. Communities in some countries [believe albinism can bring magical powers](#), wealth and good fortune — a superstition that has led to attackers kidnapping and murdering albinos to sell their body parts to witch doctors on the black market.

According to the United Nations, [there have been over 600 attacks on people](#) with albinism documented in 28 countries in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade. Many more cases are thought to go unreported.



THE 77 PERCENT: LIVING WITH ALBINISM IN KENYA

Education is key - Meet Daniel

"People with albinism are often not given proper education because of discrimination and stigmatisation. So we [at the Albinism Society of Kenya] came up with programs to empower them, to start their own businesses and be independent. That way they can take care of their families and be able to help themselves." Daniel Shisia is spokesperson for the Albinism Society of Kenya.

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nm/rc (AFP, dpa)

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Malawian albinos under threat

At least 18 people with albinism have been murdered in Malawi since 2014 and Malawian police have documented 69 violent attacks. Now Amnesty International is calling on the government to put a stop to it. (07.06.2016)

UN report criticizes surge in attacks on people with albinism in Africa

A UN report has pointed the finger at superstition as a force driving rising attacks on people with albinism. At least 40 people have been attacked in the last eight months, but that number could well be higher. (22.03.2016)

'Education can eradicate prejudices against albinos'

What does International Albinism Awareness Day mean for people living with the skin condition? DW spoke to Abdallah Saleh Possi, a Tanzanian deputy state minister, who is an albino. (13.06.2016)

Cameroonian albino fights prejudice with music

The 49-year-old Mengue Etienne lives with albinism. As a young boy he was chased out of a taxi and when he turned to a police officer, he told him "albinos are evil." The experience led to his fascinating musical career. (19.09.2016)

Mr. Albinism Kenya: 'Finally we achieved something'

Kenya has just crowned its first ever Mr. and Miss Albinism. In a region where people living with albinism live in fear of ritual killings, the beauty pageant offered a rare chance for them to show their talents. (24.10.2016)

What is albinism?

White skin, pale pinkish eyes and light hair - those are the physical traits that some connect with albinism, the condition affecting #dealwithme's Leonidah. Find out what causes albinism and how it's diagnosed. (14.11.2014)

Zambian albinos call for end to brutality

At least ten albinos are murdered in ritual killings every year in Zambia. Some believe albino body parts bring wealth or luck. Those born with the genetic condition are calling for an end to this madness. (29.01.2017)

Living with albinism in Kenya

Living with albinism can be risky in some countries in Africa. In Kenya stigma exists, but things are better. Here, three young men tell their positive stories of living with the condition in Nairobi. (20.12.2017)

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