

A photograph of two Black women celebrating a birthday. The woman on the left, wearing a brown top, is smiling and looking up at the woman on the right. The woman on the right, wearing a white top, is holding a birthday cake and looking down at it. The cake is decorated with pink frosting and has a sign that says "Happy Birthday Kelsa Cosmetics". There are white balloons and streamers in the background.

**"When they said friends can't
be business partners, we
proved everyone wrong."**

ELSA LUSSAKUENO & KELLY BANTU


Founder of Kelsa Cosmetics

#SheDID⚡IT

Find your why and you'll find the solution

Entrepreneurship isn't an easy path, but when Kelly & Elsa met, they found a business partner in each other. When figuring out their idea, they circled back to their own need: not finding the right shade of lip products for their dark skin. Being aware of an emerging trend for certain lipsticks, they too wanted to use them but found nothing in their surroundings. **So hey, why not make the solution yourself?** By creating Kelsa cosmetics they hopped on the “in diversity we create unity” train and headed to the inclusive lip products destination. They filled a gap for themselves, and a whole market of dark skinned ladies who were struggling with the same problem.

When it comes to who inspired them, Elsa easily sums up her parents. Being the daughter of first generation migrants, she faced many challenges that pushed her to achieve success. Or to build her own opportunities. Her parents gifted her the ability to enjoy chances they never got, she hopes to return the favor by taking advantage of everything that comes her way, to pay her parents back. **Perseverance, motivation and vision is what she has.** Kelly on the other hand has always seen herself as an entrepreneur, the fire she carries is rooted in her need to solve problems. For herself and others, something about two birds and one stone.



“We might not be where we’d like to be just yet, we’re constantly going through obstacles. But we keep pushing ourselves to persevere, to get us out of these obstacles. This is how we’ve done it so far. Here we are, thriving, overcoming, growing.”

— ELSA LUSSAKUENO & KELLY BANTU

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It's never me vs. you, but us vs. the problem

Kelly also always believed that **no matter in which body, culture or country she was born, she would have always found her way to entrepreneurship.** It's part of her being.

Entrepreneurship might seem shiny and easy to stick, like any lipstick, but for these ladies it must be accompanied by discipline and a strategic plan. Don't forget about the \$\$\$, there is more to it than meets the eye. Profit wasn't something they saw in the first phase of their journey, Social media might show the glitter & glamour, but the work is done behind the scenes. Yet, they are proud of their work. What once was an idea that floated around in their head or only seemed possible in dreams, is now something they could hold in their hands.

The duo also switched their mindset when looking at obstacles. Setbacks are inevitable, but practice makes perfect. In other words, **every obstacle that comes their way is analyzed thoroughly, trying to figure out what went wrong and what the lesson learned needs to be.** They also strongly hold onto their positivity, no need to be down when you can only go up. But most importantly, they will always believe in their concept, the vision and mission. The reason why they started, is the reason why they're headed towards success.