

ARTICEL 5 HEROISM

BEING UNIQUE IS NORMAL

Scrolling down your Instagram home, it happens to encounter Rihanna embracing her body, being strong, and not giving a damn of what people think. As long as she does it, no problems are raised. When you see a normal person doing the same things, then the situation usually changes. Why is she in her underwear? Is she crazy? Does she want to appear as an easy girl? Why doesn't she respect herself? Why can't a normal girl be powerful and express herself? Why can't she be free to be who she wants to be?

Viola Vazzana, 25, is one of those girls. She decided to use her Instagram account as a platform to liberate who she is by being free of all the stereotypes imposed by society. Her Instagram posts shout out for freedom, individuality and awareness of her body. She is not afraid to be who she wants to be, and by doing so she spreads this amazing message to her followers. Unfortunately, not everyone understands the message behind her lingerie posts. "Often I receive critiques on how I manage my Instagram profile" she says, "never directly, but behind my back. Thankfully they are not so many, but unfortunately most of them are women. By exposing my body I've been called "hore", "sterile shit", "I want fuck you without a condom" by "men". I never reply to them, usually I report them or block them, even if it is kind of useless. To all the others that criticize me I reply, surely it's not their opinion that will stop me." Her message is not always understood, her body is hers and she is free to do what she wants with it, even if she receives a lot of negative comments. She is aware that her body is not what society wants it to be and it took her time to come to terms with it. "I never had a good relationship with my body. Often, I have been called "fat" and I know that this happens everyday to many girls. My goal is to normalize a body like mine. Women have to stop believing that to be beautiful we need to be perfect just because someone made you believe that it would be best for you. All of this comes from an ultra-catholic patriarchal society that never wanted to destroy taboos, in which we are brought up since we were very little, by believing that only certain standards are accepted and that being different is scary. So you know, it is easy to be called a bitch when actually you are trying to change the stereotypes and the psychological standards imposed by others."

Viola is a very unique woman, not only she is battling for gender equality, but she is also on the front line in creating awareness on the syndrome of Rokitansky, with which she was diagnosed when she was 14. The syndrome of Rokitansky is a feminine congenic malformation that has as a consequence the absence of the uterus, the tubes and possible malformations of the vagina. This syndrome brings a woman to feel different from the others in a non-apparent way. Viola described her experience when she first discovered it. When she was in high school, a period in life when all you want is to fit in, she already felt different. "All of your classmates start to have their periods, I didn't. There were those embarrassing moments in which I had to create excuses when I was asked for a tampon, I felt ashamed and thought I was alone in this situation." Viola had to come to terms with her sterility at a time in which you are too young to understand. At 14 you are not even aware of what sex is, or what having a baby means. She was put in front of an incomprehensible issue that led to not knowing who she was supposed to be.

Viola revealed that it was very difficult to admit her secret to someone, she didn't know who could she trust to reveal such a deep and intimate secret, and also her relationship with men was difficult as well: "I didn't feel comfortable, I was afraid to be refused by a man because I was different, because I felt less of a woman." Due to all of these psychological complications, Viola started a 4-year road analysis, started to take part of support groups and got to know other Roki girls, that were just like her and finally felt less alone. "I also need to thank theatre; I am an actress too. All of these paths lead me to overcome my traumas and accept myself." The first time she opened up about her syndrome was with a monologue that she wrote, acted and posted on Instagram, with which she finally liberated herself.

If suffering a diversity isn't enough, Viola also needs to fight a battle against the Italian government, that doesn't recognize the Rokitansky syndrome and does nothing to help. Prefacing that a woman without kids

must not be considered less of a woman, the Italian state has very severe rules on adoption, and Viola is absolutely pissed that someone else should have the power to decide whether she can be a mum or not. "The Italian Constitution states that a woman can be a woman only when she procreates... Then it became illegal the Supporting Motherhood, so having a free surrogate, in this way depriving sterile couples of having a child only because the state thinks it is just a whim. If you do it, you risk a fine of 600000€ and up to 3 years of prison. Why can a man donate his sperm for free and a woman can't "lend" her uterus to someone in need? Surely comes from gender disparity." Viola is now on the front line in really creating awareness around this topic, talking to doctors and to girls like her, also by reminding everyone that it isn't a child that will make your life complete but it's yourself.

If Viola isn't already brave and amazing enough, she has now recently started to embrace the Drag world, by creating her alter-ego Luna Stortah, "Luna Stortah was born from a profound esteem towards this kind of world, from a personal need to overcome barriers and to try to make my most courageous and brave side come out, and obviously to be even more of an (cisgender) ally to my beloved LGBTQI+ community". Viola's situation is surely similar to many of us: we get inspired by watching RuPaul's Drag Race, and admiring the Ballroom scene. We all admire the determination you see in the eyes of the competitors and the joy they express in being free to have the chance to show their art. "While I watched the shows, I wanted a family like that. As soon as I discovered that also biological women were doing drag, I didn't even think about it. So, thanks to my sister Gentle Globe I learned how to make my eyebrows disappear, that face powder is never enough, and little by little my alter-ego was gaining realness. I finally felt as a beautiful woman." Viola by being a theatre actress, really wishes some day to have the opportunity to give Luna Stortah a theatre show and she would also be honoured to work with the Milano Drags. "By knowing that I have privilege, it is important to use it to help someone that sometimes doesn't. But I really hope that some day the art of Drag Queens/Kings will be respected and appreciated in Italy."

Lastly Viola wishes a different world, like many of us do. She wishes a world that respects nature and people. she wishes a world open to humanity's differences, where finally the less privileged can be supported by everyone. She wishes a world in which a woman can do whatever she likes to be happy. She wishes a world without prejudice, where to post a lingerie picture would not be an occasion to be criticised or to received unwanted "compliments". She wishes a world where justice is really the same for everyone and where equality and respect are fundamental rights. I wish with you Viola.