



PRESS RELEASE

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FW de Klerk - "The challenge is to bring out the best in you, to fulfil your potential."

On Sunday, August 4 at 6.57pm on SABC3, **21 Icons South Africa** will feature former president FW de Klerk, who will go down in history as the white man who finally dismantled apartheid and flung open the doors to a democratic South Africa — a bridge-builder who stared down fierce opposition and criticism from his own people and political party to put the country firmly and fearlessly on the path to peace, equality and justice for all.

In the movie, FW de Klerk remembers the day in parliament he put South Africa on a new course and reveals what gave him the courage to continue on that difficult road, as well as why he would advise anyone against trying to emulate him.

"What really kept me sort of positive throughout the whole process," he says in **21 Icons South Africa**, "was firstly the fact that I succeeded in taking the majority of whites with me. They could've kicked me out ... the fact that I succeeded in convincing them to take the courageous route, which we've taken, was for me my inspiration."

For the portrait, which will be published as a poster in the Sunday Times on August 4, photographer Adrian Steirn asked De Klerk to assume the meditative lotus position high up in a mountain pass in the Western Cape. The portrait speaks of a man at peace on a number of levels – both with what lies behind him and his role in it, and his confidence in the future of South Africa. It is a uniquely frank portrait of an elderly man not scared to show his vulnerability.

"I wanted to make sure that this portrait of De Klerk was a side that no one else had seen before," says Steirn. "I wanted to shoot something that really

represented what he had done for South Africa. I thought it would be such a great mix of a man alone, and a man at peace."

The proceeds of the sale of the signed portrait will go to the FW de Klerk Foundation, which he has established since his retirement from active politics. "The FW de Klerk Foundation has two main focuses," explains De Klerk. "The one is the upholding and strengthening of our constitution, because it was a historical accord ... the other is to continue to foster constructive, solution-oriented dialogue. We must not shout at each other — we must start talking to each other as we did during the negotiations."

De Klerk was born in 1936 into a family politically active in the then National Party, and supported apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism as a young man. He had a strong sense of community service and making sacrifices to fulfil that role, and quit his life as a lawyer after 12 years of practice to become a full-time politician. In the '80s he filled many ministerial portfolios in cabinet, including that of post and telecommunication, social welfare and pensions, and national education and planning. Though known as politically conservative, by 1989 he stood firmly in the "verligte" camp in his party and became set to change the course of history when, in February that year, he was elected as its head and, in September, president of South Africa.

De Klerk then introduced a new spirit into South African politics, advocating a negotiation process that would lead to a country free from domination and oppression. On 2 February 1990 he announced in Parliament the unbanning of the ANC and other banned political parties and groupings, as well as the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, after 27 years. "I felt a sense of great calmness and certainty in making that speech," De Klerk says. "As I walked into parliament I said to my wife: 'South Africa will never be the same again.'"



Months later his government and the ANC began formal negotiations to bring about majority rule. The repeal of apartheid laws followed in 1991 and the following year De Klerk got a resounding “yes” from white voters in a referendum to test the support for reform. De Klerk’s entire presidency was devoted to tireless work to create the framework in which constitutional reform, negotiation talks and democratic elections could take place – which would surely mean the demise of his political power and career. For this he received the Nobel peace prize in 1993, jointly with Nelson Mandela.

To this day, De Klerk believes the positives in South Africa far outweigh the negatives, and he continues to share his vast negotiation and political experience with others across the African continent and the globe. He serves in various civic and academic societies and think-tanks and has received numerous honours, honorary doctorates and prizes for his political courage, leadership and work to bring about peace and democracy in South Africa.

Programme synopsis: FW de Klerk remembers the day in parliament he put South Africa on a new course and reveals what gave him the courage to do so. Shot at his home and with footage from his portrait photo shoot with Adrian Steirn in the Franschoek Pass in the Western Cape, it portrays a side of De Klerk not seen before.

On behalf of **21 ICONS South Africa**

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