



21 ICONS
SEASON II
SOUTH AFRICA

Adrian Steirn



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 24 August 2014 at 12h00 (SA)

Johannesburg – 24 August 2014 - Frene Ginwala - “The hallmark of a good leader is that you don’t see yourself as a leader. Leadership is about listening to people, setting an example, thinking about the issues from all aspects and then leading by example, not just making speeches.”

On 24 August 2014 at 20h27 on SABC 3, 21 ICONS season two features Frene Ginwala, the first female speaker at the National Assembly of South Africa.

This episode is the fourth in the series, which pays homage to the men and women whose courage, passion, dedication and vision has not only helped to shape our country, but whose influence has had a global impact. These are the heroes of South Africa; people we look up to and whose legacies linger.

In addition to the short films, where each subject speaks frankly about their accomplishments, the challenges they have faced and the motivations that have propelled them forward, 21 ICONS further comprises a series of black and white portraits featuring each of these role models. Filmmaker and photographer Adrian Steirn has succeeded in capturing the essence of what makes these people great in pictures that make an evocative statement about who they are and how they have contributed to our country.

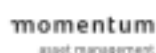
Steirn comments, “I’ve met many people whose stories are incredibly powerful – it’s a true privilege to discover more about the human spirit and share these individuals personal accounts, their positive character traits and their propensity to influence and shape perceptions and transform societal norms for the better, impacting the communities around them.”

The portraits appear in a Sunday newspaper on the same day that the film is flighted, and will be sold later this year at a charity auction, with funds donated to the charity of the ICONS’ choice. Ginwala has nominated a charity of her choice as the recipient of the funds generated through the sale of her portrait.

Ginwala’s portrait depicts the formidable woman standing in front of a sign pointing in a number of directions. Some arrows show the way to the various countries that Ginwala helped heroes of the struggle enter as they escaped Apartheid; others are emblazoned with the names of the values –democracy, independence, togetherness, forgiveness – that she embodies as one of the most innovative and pioneering representatives of democracy in South Africa. As befits someone with a custom of speaking out, be it against discrimination or gender inequality, and someone whose voice was a key feature of our first democratic parliament, she is pictured holding a megaphone.

Given her upbringing, Ginwala’s entrance into politics was almost inevitable. She explains to Steirn that her political consciousness was created by her parents, who were always reminding her and her sister that they were privileged. “I grew up in the 30s and the 40s, when the congress movement was at its height, whether it was the Indian Congress or the ANC. It was a movement that emphasised the importance of reporting back to the population, so it was all about mass rallies and meetings, rather than being office bound organisations. Even as kids we all wanted to go to the rallies, and we therefore got involved gradually.”

But it wasn’t simply the widespread popularity of these movements that nudged Ginwala into activism; even as a child, she had a keen awareness of the divisions created by Apartheid. One of her earliest memories is of the fact that she wasn’t able to use the playground equipment like other children, because she was Indian; another time, she





21 ICONS
SEASON II
SOUTH AFRICA

Adrian Steirn



recalls that, at the age of 10, she was asked to pen a letter for the household's 30-year-old helper, giving him permission to walk in the street without a pass.

By the time Ginwala went to study law overseas, she was an active member of the Indian Congress, which by then had joined forces with the ANC. Her involvement with the latter organisation increased when, after her return from her studies, she was approached by Walter Sisulu to set up an external mission, a process that gained momentum after the Sharpeville Massacre and subsequent banning of the ANC. Ginwala admits that she didn't know how to set up the mission, or even how to help the exiles gain entry into other countries – but she did have a particularly valuable resource: a passport.

The first person she helped move out of South Africa was Oliver Tambo, helping him get to Tanganyika and from there to London and, ultimately, the United Nations. With all the logistics, she says that her job was akin to that of a travel agent: her role was to obtain travel papers for the exiles, then receive them in Tanganyika.

This lasted three years, until an accident necessitated a move to London for medical treatment. Here, Ginwala's journalistic career flourished, and she contributed to a number of prominent British publications.

And then, eventually, came the day the ANC was unbanned and the exiles were welcomed home. Ginwala says to Steirn that she never doubted that day would come: "I always believed we would, otherwise we wouldn't have continued."

With her return to South Africa came a new position within the ANC: although she had planned to set up the organisation's research department, Nelson Mandela informed her he wanted her to be parliamentary speaker. Ginwala reveals that she had wanted to turn down her nomination for the role, but with the entire leadership backing Mandela's proposal, she felt there was no point in saying no.

Looking back, she is able to see the mark she left on her country. "I believed I strengthened and transformed the parliament, which is what we needed to do. We started that parliament with a blank sheet; there were no traditions and no precedents as far as the ANC was concerned, because there had been no democracy. If you don't have democracy, you don't have a parliament."

The parliament that was created was, in accord with the ANC's wishes and ideals, one of negotiation and representation. And the parliament of today? Ginwala acknowledges the challenges ahead of South Africa, but says we need to be aware that the direness of circumstances – including extreme poverty – that have prevailed in South Africa means that our solutions have had to work especially hard.

She believes these can be overcome, with good leadership and input from all members of society. "We need a South Africa in which the population as a whole – men, women, poor, rich - has a say, knowing their views and attitudes are taken into account," she states.

The 21 ICONS App features additional information about the icons, the project and its creators to provide a fully interactive experience. Download it from iTunes App Store: <http://tinyurl.com/lf3cfzm> or Google Play: <http://tinyurl.com/ovtcy45>

For more information, follow us on Twitter: @21 ICONS, Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/21ICONS>, Pinterest: <http://www.pinterest.com/21ICONS/> or visit www.21ICONS.com.

PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS





21 ICONS
SEASON II
SOUTH AFRICA

Adrian Steirn



Frene Ginwala, former Speaker at the National Assembly, talks to filmmaker Adrian Steirn about how she helped struggle leaders into exile during Apartheid, her role as the first speaker in South Africa's democratic parliament, and her multifaceted career.

NOTE TO EDITORS

21 ICONS South Africa is an annual collection of photographs and short films of South Africans who have reached the pinnacle of achievement in their fields of endeavour. These men and women have been an inspiration through their extraordinary social contribution. It is not a definitive list and does not denote any ranking.

The short film-series documents the conversations between Steirn as the photographer and filmmaker and the icons. Each short film provides insight into both the subject and photographer's creative approach to the portrait.

On behalf of **21 ICONS South Africa**

Issued by: **Grapevine Communications**

Tel : 011 706 9600

Fax: 011 706 9365

Heidi Pretorius

Project Management

heidi@honeybell.co.za

SA Mobile: +27 82 940 3464





21 ICONS
SEASON II
SOUTH AFRICA

Adrian Stein

