



21 ICONS
SEASON II
SOUTH AFRICA

Adrian Steirn



21 Icons releases Season II documentary – The Promise of Freedom

Johannesburg – April 2015 – On Sunday 26 April 2015 at 19h30 on SABC 3, the hour-long documentary *'The Promise of Freedom'*, the culmination of the 21 ICONS South Africa Season II short film series, takes a journey with Nelson Mandela and many of the most influential architects of democracy as they share their experience and unique ability to unite in the face of adversity. The documentary repeats the next day, Monday 27 May, Freedom Day at 13h00.

Ster Kinekor Cinema Nouveau played host at the exclusive premiere on 16 April where the full-length feature film *'The Promise of Freedom'* was screened to a captivated audience.

Broadcast on SABC 3 last year, the Season II 21-week series featured conversations with 21 remarkable South Africans while being photographed, men and women who have captured the world's imagination with their dignity, humanity, and selfless struggle for a better world. The project is the creation of celebrated photographer and filmmaker Adrian Steirn.

"The message is that we are moving forward," says Steirn, "When Nelson Mandela passed on, the world pondered the question of whether South Africa would continue to live out his legacy. After photographing and interviewing these individuals I know that the answer is yes! The man may be at rest, but his spirit lives in each of us."

In a country experiencing transition and the entrenched social, political and economic turmoil that is characteristic of change, the documentary presents a collective and unified message of hope through the astute insights of 21 extraordinary South African leaders.

The vision of the project is to awaken and unlock the potential in each South African citizen and for society to recognise what needs to be done to uphold racial tolerance and social harmony. The featured icons, demonstrate through their profound actions that all individuals can become an up-stander within their society and a possible future icon.

Guided by the theme, *'The Promise of Freedom'*, the overarching message of the documentary is a positive affirmation of South African citizen's courage, endurance and optimism.

Featuring moving footage of Mandela's passing and redefining the South African struggle the three chapter documentary is a recollection of the past and a reflection on a nation today.

The opening chapter of the Season II documentary recalls the turbulent past. Albie Sachs is mesmerising as he describes this period of our history, so too are Frene Ginwala, Pregs Govender and Zubeida Jaffa who narrate remarkable stories from their own journey to freedom.

The second chapter sees the icons musing on their relationship with Nelson Mandela and what he means to each of them. Lucas Radebe recalls "Tata came to Leeds," "He came to me and said, 'This is my hero.' I'm telling you I couldn't believe it. It was amazing. I have tried my best to follow his legacy."

The story unfolds of how the icons harnessing their experiences and freedom to attain success and contribute to their communities. Intiaz Sooliman describes how he gave up a career in medicine to head up the disaster relief action group, Gift of the Givers and he admirably describes the generosity of South Africans with their deep sense of *Ubuntu* spirit.

Peter Magubane, the photographer famous for documenting the rise and fall of apartheid said: "This is my country, South Africa and I was prepared to die for my freedom. No-one was going to stop me taking pictures because I want the world to see what kind of animal is apartheid....if the system of today does not give me what I want, does not give the people what they want I will not pack my bags and go. I will document."

There were those who used words as weapons during the struggle and penned powerful stories and truths that were often banned. South African poet James Matthews realised during the struggle that his words could be used as a weapon and the first black female South African author Miriam Tlali said that, "I was very certain about the fact



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that Africans would ultimately get their freedom. I was already infused with the idea that I had to write everything. I wrote my first book and it was against the system, I knew it wouldn't be accepted and I didn't really mind about that."

South African satirist Pieter Dirk-Uys believes we are the luckiest people in the world. "We could have been Syria, we could have been every horror story in the world."

As the documentary progresses we are inspired by the remarkable achievements of the icons, but we are also reminded that there is much work to be done. We have won our democracy, but now our challenges lie in building for the future – educating our youth, engraining social cohesion, acceptance, understanding, growth and stability.

Herman Mashaba's story is an illustration of one man becoming master of his own destiny – something he believes that we all can, and should, do. We can't rely on government to turn our lives into success, he maintains; they should provide an enabling environment, but after that, it's up to us to make the most of what we've been given.

Icons Francois Pienaar and Grace Masuku discuss their views on being part of a balanced and healthy society and celebrated scientist Jill Farrant explains why she chooses South Africa above any other place in the world.

In the closing chapter our icons highlight what has been done, but also emphasise the work that needs to be accomplished – Mandela's wish of creating opportunity, continuous upliftment of our society, creating a sustainable economy and ensuring equality for all. The audience is left understanding the nature of what needs to be achieved, and inspired by the fact that the future of South Africa lies in the spirit if its people.

The documentary features Albie Sachs, Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, Herman Mashaba, Frene Ginwala, Francois Pienaar, Grace Masuku, Pops Mohamed, Kitty Phetla, James Matthews, Professor Tebello Nyokong, Pieter Dirk-Uys, Pregs Govender, Lucas Radebe, Zubeida Jaffer, Anant Singh, Jill Farrant, Peter Magubane, Zanele Situ, Miriam Tlali, Taddy Blecher and Sandra Prinsloo.

"These are the heroes of South Africa, people we admire whose common leadership and selfless personal characteristics are required by future generations. If we are to continue Madiba's legacy to take this nation forward their stories will need to remain for generations to come," says Steirn.

The documentary leaves the viewer inspired, not mourning a leader, but motivated by the philosophy that everyone, regardless of race, creed or socio-economic standing, can act with integrity and make a positive impact in our world today.

PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

Told through the personal chronicles and anecdotes of 21 remarkable South Africans, 21 Icons Season II is a reflection of a nation since Madiba's passing. Guided by the theme, *'The Promise of Freedom'*, the overarching message is a positive affirmation that South Africans are actively encouraging and enacting Mandela's legacy. We are moving forward as one. The man may be at rest, but his spirit lives in each of us.

About 21 Icons South Africa

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.

Season two of 21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa, Momentum Asset Management, Nikon, Deloitte and the Department of Arts and Culture.

Season two debuted on Sunday 03 August and continuing for another 20 weeks, one of 21 short films was screened every Sunday on SABC 3 at 20h27.



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On each of these Sundays, a poster of the icon's portrait, taken by Adrian Steirn and his creative team, was published in the City Press to form a memorable collection.

Media partners include SABC 3, City Press (Media 24), Provantage and Mxit.

Social Media:

21 Icons engages with the public through:

Twitter: @21Icons

Website: <http://www.21icons.com>

Mobisite: www.21icons.com

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/21Icons>

Pinterest: <http://www.pinterest.com/21ICONS/>

iTunes App Store: <http://tinyurl.com/lf3cfzm>

Google Play: <http://tinyurl.com/ovtcy45>

On behalf of **21 ICONS South Africa**

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