



Celebrating the lives of extraordinary young South African people

21icons
 @21icons #OurFuturesNow
 @21icons
 21ICONS
 www.21icons.com

21 ICONS was launched in South Africa and around the world in 2013. A socio-cultural multimedia project spanning film (television and internet), photography (print and posters) and social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram), 21 ICONS South Africa celebrates the lives of extraordinary South Africans who have been catalysts in shaping our nation's and the global landscape, whether in a sociopolitical, environmental, athletic, or artistic sense.

By making accessible the personal stories of young individuals whose lives are catalysts for positive change, the purpose of the project is to show the way forward for a new generation to aspire to be socially conscious and active citizens. 21 ICONS has built a unique platform for connecting and imparting key attributes of the lives of the people it features who transform societal norms for the better.

The overarching vision is to awaken and unlock the potential in each South African citizen.

SABC 3 airs this acclaimed short-film series on Sundays at 19:27. This season (the third) has been envisaged as a tribute to the country's future, shining the spotlight on young South African icons.

Caster Semanya has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season III as an individual whose life serves as an inspiration to others to never give up and pursue your dreams despite hardships. She strives to serve her community through her sports foundation and setting an example of living positively.



Matlwa Mabaso has been selected as an icon as a voice for the new generation of South Africans dealing with issues such as race, poverty and gender. She is also acknowledged for making healthcare more accessible and for establishing educational support programmes.

Kopano Matlwa Mabaso

This 30-year-old South African medical doctor pursuing a PhD in public health at the University of Oxford is also the author of the critically acclaimed novels *Coconut* and *Spilt Milk*.

She says, "I could never choose between medicine and writing. I love them both. As a doctor, you have the unique privilege of listening to people's stories. They tell you things they would never tell anyone else. I care deeply about people's stories, so for me, medicine and writing make sense together."

Matlwa co-founded Waiting Room Education by Medical Students, a health promotion organisation educating patients and their families on common health conditions in the waiting rooms of mobile clinics.

Pretoria-born Matlwa was just nine years old when South Africa birthed its democracy in 1994. In her debut novel, *Coconut* (published in 2006), she writes about her experience growing up as a young black girl in the new South Africa.

Coconut earned her the 2007 European Literary Award – of which she was the youngest ever recipient – and the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa, considered by some to be the African equivalent of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

In 2012, she founded the Transitions Foundation, an organisation that attempts to improve the performance of young South Africans across the gamut of educational needs.

On the future of South Africa, she says, "I am very optimistic about our rainbow nation. Maybe it needs to be re-examined and re-imagined, but there's a sense that it is ours. Young people are going to lead and it's such an exciting time."

Matlwa concludes, "I think it's a mistake that we go abroad to learn and come back – as South Africans, we have so much to teach the world, and our continent has so much to contribute. This is the place people will be looking toward in the future."

Matlwa holds an MBChB from the University of Cape Town and an MSc in Global Health Science from the University of Oxford.



Caster Semanya

A world champion middle-distance runner, the 24-year-old Caster has overcome a unique set of challenges. Born in Polokwane in 1991, she was raised in the village of Fairlie, deep in northern Limpopo. Growing up with three sisters and a brother, Semanya attended Nthema Secondary School and began training as a runner when she took up soccer as a sport.

Semanya says, "I love running. I feel free and I can just be myself. I would watch the Olympics and the All Africa Games and see my role models running. I had the feeling that maybe I could be like them or better."

In July 2008, at the age of 17, Semanya participated in the 2008 World Junior Championships, and won the gold in the 800 m at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games with a time of 2:04.23. She says, "It was one of the best moments. I never thought I'd beat my competitors."

In 2009, Semanya took part in the African Junior Championships, where she won both the 800 m and the 1 500 m races with times of 1:56.72 and 4:08.01 respectively. In that race, Semanya improved her 800 m personal best by seven seconds in less than nine months, including four seconds in that race alone. The 800 m time was the world leading time at that date and it was both a national and a championship record.

Semanya founded the Caster Semanya Foundation through which she trains and assists young athletes. "I know what it takes to be a world champion, so I just want to give young kids an opportunity to taste what I have tasted. That's what I want in my heart."

She concludes by saying, "It's great to be a South African – I love it. I'm blessed to be a part of it. And now I am a part of our history."

LEFT 'We Need Spirit': Semanya's posture is a re-imagining of her beating the odds and crossing the finish line. The image shows her in her element – triumphant and dignified

BELOW 'Imagined Reality': A colourful 'wonderland' echoes Matlwa's love for discovering characters and health solutions. Seated among multiple palm tree leaves – a severed coconut to her left and milk spilling to her right – she is imagined as the conjurer of a fantasy world that breaks boundaries through creativity.