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Local News

21 Icons showcases founder of DreamGirls

JOHANNESBURG – The 15th icon who features in 21 Icons South Africa Season III, The Future of a Nation, is impact entrepreneur and founder of the South African chapter of DreamGirls International, Ezlyn Barends.

6 hours ago



Photo: Andy Ellis ART AT WORK: Photographer Gary Van Wyk directs the shot during Ezlyn Barends' portrait shoot at Ginkgo Agency in Cape Town as part of the 21 Icons South Africa project.

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The 31-year-old was selected to appear in the third season of the short film and photographic series, 21 Icons because she empowers young girls to attend university and gain a higher degree of education, as well as increases the number of high school diplomas and tertiary qualifications acquired by under-represented schoolgirls.

"Success for me is not a destination. It's a process. Knowing who you are, where you are going, and progressively moving towards it, that is success," she stated, when speaking about being chosen for the project.

Originally from Kuils River in Cape Town, Barends goes to great lengths to assist and support marginalised youth by unlocking their potential and access to educational initiatives.

"In South Africa, I realised that girls faced a wider set of problems and there was a need for a holistic programme that not only focused on the academics but also supported them in a different way."

Business etiquette isn't taught so she also imparts other everyday business skills to develop all-round individuals to provide a holistic individual for the workplace.

At the age of 25, she did not feel fulfilled and questioned her life purpose. So in July 2010, Barends decided to follow her calling to have a positive impact on society by assisting with youth education and entrepreneurship and established DreamGirls, a self-outcome based, capacity-building enrichment programme for girls and young women.

Barends' short-film will explain how her father established the Dad Fund (in honour of Daniel Arthur Douman) who was an outstanding community leader and mentor to him. This inspired her to follow in his footsteps on the principle of giving back and helping others. It was through the Dad Fund that she created DreamGirls.

Her portrait is titled Higher Self and principal photographer for 21 Icons Season III, Gary Van Wyk explained the visual elements behind it.

"Seated at a wooden school desk below a blown-up, projected image of herself. Barends is photographed looking past the camera lens, seemingly imagining her future success. Representing the enormous possibilities that can come about through education, the portrait embodies Barends' work to uplift and assist young women in their pursuit of higher education."

Barends' short film will be shown on SABC 3 on 13 December at 7.27pm, with a repeat the next day at 5.57pm on the same channel.

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