



## 21 ICONS SEASON THREE (A FUTURE OF A NATION) FEATURES JOLYNN MINNAAR

**Jolynn Minnaar** – *“We have to be active citizens and participate in our democracy. It needs young people’s voices. It needs our participation.”*

On 29 November 2015 on SABC 3 at 19h27, the acclaimed short-film series 21 ICONS will feature the 13th icon of its third season: 27-year-old, award-winning documentary filmmaker and change agent, Jolynn Minnaar, who tracked her own journey across the US to investigate the effects of fracking.

The 21 ICONS short-film will showcase how the young, inquisitive girl from the Karoo became the acclaimed director of the groundbreaking film *‘Unearthed’* that aims to unite South Africans against the exploitation of the Karoo. It traces how she transitioned from documenting events to changing them through direct involvement in her film. The episode will repeat the next day at 17h57 on the same channel.

21 ICONS traces South Africa’s history over the course of its three seasons, moving from the fight for freedom to the country’s growth during democracy, and concluding with a vision of the future. This season has been envisaged as a tribute to the country’s future, shedding the spotlight on young South African icons.

For this reason, young South African talent Gary van Wyk (34) has stepped up as principal photographer for the third season. Adrian Steirn, who conceived the project, continues his involvement as one of the photographers capturing the behind-the-scenes images.

Minnaar has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season III for *‘Unearthed’* that was written, directed and shot by her alone and received critical acclaim at the Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival, winning the coveted Green Award for her work.

She has also been chosen for her work in the fracking arena where she works with several community coalitions from the Karoo and throughout Africa as well as her associations with international grassroots organisations to undercover the darker side of the fracking industry. Through the establishment of the *‘Voices of the Karoo’* campaign, she seeks to readdress this imbalance and ensure that the voices of citizens in the poor, rural area are heard.

On her selection as an icon she says, “In essence, I’m a young South African storyteller eager to see a better tomorrow for my country. If I can do that using film and photography I’ll be very happy. Film is an incredible way to contribute to the world – you can effect social change and impact people’s lives.”

In 2011, after graduating with distinction from the University of Cape Town with a triple major BA degree in Film, Media and Media Production, Minnaar specialised in cinematography and editing at AFDA, the South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance.

She works as a director, photographer and cinematographer as well as communications strategist in the local film and media industry.

Minnaar tells Van Wyk that there are great responsibilities that come with being a documentary filmmaker, “It’s a powerful medium, and very persuasive. You have to work with integrity. I will always be a filmmaker who will have sleepless nights if I know I didn’t spend that day committed to the truth.”

Commenting on her early days growing up in the Karoo she says, “I’ve always had a really interesting relationship with the Karoo – at first I couldn’t get out of there fast enough, and now I’m making a film about it.”

When news first surfaced that multinational companies were interested in a potential shale gas reserve beneath the Karoo, she discovered that the local communities have been largely sidelined or secluded from the debate. The motion picture investigates fracking and its harmful effects in North America in order to understand what this new method of gas extraction could mean for the semi-arid Karoo and other countries, which are considering its implementation.





In an intimate conversation with Van Wyk she says, “The Karoo is a very rural area with low literacy levels, and fracking is such a complex issue. I made the commitment to *‘Unearthed’* to ensure that I could empower people with information.”

During a portrait sitting she talks about how she uses film as a mouthpiece for social causes, “Never before has a generation been so empowered. Our access to information is huge. Already we’re seeing the power of social media. I think it’s amazing we can actually use those tools for the good as well.”

She adds, “This young generation of South Africans has been born into an incredible country and I’m so encouraged by their optimism and vibrancy. It’s such an exciting time to be alive in South Africa and to open yourself up to what’s happening around us.”

For the portrait *‘Consider This’* which will appear digitally on the Monday after her short-film is released, Van Wyk describes the visual elements, “Surrounded by multiple beds of fire, Minnaar is photographed in a quarry in Durbanville, standing defiantly amongst the flames. A reference to one of the harmful side-effects of fracking – where flammable methane gas infiltrates public water systems – Minnaar is imagined as the tireless protector of the land she inhabits, and a documentary filmmaker who will walk through the fire to uncover the truth.”

On the future of South Africa, she comments, “Every single South African is in a position to help someone else; that’s the way that we’re going to deepen democracy. Everyone needs to contribute.”

Van Wyk concludes by asking the audience to share their stories on social platforms by answering the question: “*What do you stand for?*”

Followers are encouraged to share their personal triumphs or to nominate a member from the community who is making a profound difference.

Connect on Twitter: @21Icons using the hash-tag #OurFutureIsNow and [www.facebook.com/21icons](http://www.facebook.com/21icons)

**ENDS/**

### **PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS**

Born and raised in the Karoo, Jolynn Minnaar talks to photographer Gary Van Wyk about why *‘Unearthed’* was such an important mission for her, the immense responsibility she feels as a documentary filmmaker, and why the South African youth is her ultimate inspiration.

### **ABOUT 21 ICONS SEASON III**

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 truly unique platform for connecting and imparting key attributes of the lives of the people it features who transform societal norms for the better. It is not a definitive list and does not denote any ranking.

The short film-series documents the conversations between Gary Van Wyk 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.

Behind each portrait lies a carefully planned concept that captures not only the essence of each icon visually, but also in spirit and in terms of their unique legacy.

The narrative storyboard incorporates the icons’ descriptions of the people and social advances that have created opportunities for them. By sharing their personal stories and what they have done with their freedom, the short-films communicate these stories to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps and move forward collectively as a new democracy.



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Following the broadcast on Sunday evenings, the icons' portraits, taken by Van Wyk, will be published online and on digital platforms immediately available for individuals to engage and interact with these 21 remarkable new South African icons.

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Season three debuted on Sunday 6 September 2015 and broadcasts for a further 20 weeks, with a short film screened every Sunday on SABC 3 at 19h27.

This is an exciting opportunity for South Africans to engage with, and among, themselves to drive nation building and cohesion in a way that redefines the South African identity.

Season three of 21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

**Social Media:**

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