



PRESS RELEASE

21 Icons and SABC 3 celebrate the 20th Birthday of South Africa's freedom with the broadcast of 21 Icons: A Journey to Democracy.

On Sunday April 27 at 20:30, the documentary of **21 Icons South Africa** takes a journey with Nelson Mandela and many of the most influential architects of democracy as they tell of their journey and reaching the landmark first democratic elections held on April 27, 1994.

Broadcast on SABC3 last year, the 21-week series features conversations with extraordinary 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 was inspired by Nelson Mandela and is the creation of celebrated photographer and documentary filmmaker Adrian Steirn.

Says Steirn: "South Africans are unique in their ability to unite in the face of adversity a characteristic admired around the world. I have been blessed to document the stories of 21 extraordinary South African leaders, their highs and lows, and the journey of how South Africa became a democracy. That journey became the **21 Icons** project."

The five chapter documentary features moving footage of Steirn and his team visiting Mandela at his home in Qunu, Eastern Cape in 2011, where Madiba enjoyed the portraits that had already been taken for the series – many of them close personal friends of his, including George Bizos and Ahmed Kathrada.

The documentary tells the story of South Africa's turbulent past — the apartheid years — through the eyes of icons John Kani, Gcina Mhlophe, Zackie Achmat, the late Phillip Tobias, Sophia Williams De Bruyn, George Bizos, Johnny Clegg, Kumi Naidoo, Lillian Cingo, Hugh Masekela, Nadine Gordimer and Yvonne Chaka Chaka. They discuss the divisive nature of those times, the pain and loss of living in exile, the hardships brought on by being in the

underground struggle, and how events such as the Sharpeville massacre shaped their passion and determination to fight on for a free and just South Africa. The artists among them also discuss how the cultural boycott affected their work, and how they used their art to fight apartheid, each in their own way.

It also features FW de Klerk, Gary Player and Desmond Tutu. FW de Klerk journeys back to the day he announced Mandela's release in Parliament, whereas the others share the memories of their incredible joy at seeing him walk out of Victor Verster Prison – some from afar, in exile, some on television, and some right there with him.

Helen Sebidi, Evelina Tshabalala, Karel Benadie and Lillian Cingo, focus on South Africa today and in the future – the struggles that still prevail, the work that still needs to be done, as well as the reasons why the country has a great chance of creating an equitable and just society, despite all its challenges.

That this is no time to rest is a distinctive message from the icons. Says Hugh Masekela: "We beat the monster, but there's still so much injustice that must be tackled." Icons Ahmed Kathrada and Kumi Naidoo and storyteller Gcina Mhlophe considers the road ahead. Says Mhlophe "We've climbed the mountain and now we have a bigger view of what needs to be done. We've made many mistakes, but there's also so much we've achieved."

It is Zackie Achmat, who sums up the spirit of South Africa and Madiba's legacy the best when he says with total conviction: "We will make South Africa a better place. We will. Black and white together."

Says Steirn: "If I look back at what initiated the **21 Icons** project for me, it was the human spirit I found in South Africa. I've never experienced anything like it before. To meet the people on the street, to understand what the legacy of Nelson Mandela was really all about, was to get such a deep insight into the goodness of what we men and woman are capable of."



The portrait of Madiba was sold for a record R2-million – the highest ever paid for a fine arts photograph in South Africa – to an anonymous US buyer. The proceeds have been donated to The Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa.

The remaining 20 icons’ portraits will be auctioned at a gala event in Tshwane City Hall at a charity gala event in May 2014. All funds raised will be donated to each icon’s charity of choice.

Public participation is invited on **Twitter: @21icons**; **www.21icons.com** and **www.facebook.com/21icons**.

21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa, Nikon and Deloitte and supported by The Department of Arts & Culture as a nation-building initiative.

NOTE TO MEDIA:

THERE WILL BE A MEDIA SCREENING AT THE FRINGE THEATRE, JOBURG THEATRE COMPLEX ON 23 APRIL AT 6:00PM FOR 6:30PM

ENDS

On behalf of **21 ICONS South Africa**

MEDIA QUERIES:

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