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Ezlyn Barends calls herself an 'impact entrepreneur', using her business skills and experience to change the lives of young girls in South Africa, through the local chapter of DreamGirls – an international mentoring and education initiative.

NGO genes

This 31-year-old Henley Business School grad comes from a family of humanitarians. Her father founded the DAD Fund, an education-focused non-profit organisation. Out of that grew **DreamGirls**, founded in 2012, which is described as a 'sisterhood of young female professionals, entrepreneurs and leaders' who give their time to guide and support underprivileged teenage girls in their quests to access higher education and employment.

The work of DreamGirls has not only fulfilled Ezlyn in a personal sense – she left a career in advertising and marketing for it – it has tangible benefits for participants on both sides of the relationships it creates. And it is this form of 'paying it forward' that has earned Ezlyn recognition from her work: she was included in the Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young People list in 2014, named as a 'Global Shaper' by the World Economic Forum in 2013, and received an SAB Foundation Innovation Award in 2012.



A fitting tribute

Her work also caught the attention of her work, entitled *Higher Self*, for South Africa] and there was a need supported them in a different way everyday business skills to develop all round individuals to provide a holistic individual for the workplace.'

a short film and portrait about a wider set of problems [in the academics but also s], so we also impart other

Always striving

The photograph – shot by Gary van Wyk – shows Ezlyn at a school desk, contemplating a vision of herself in business attire. She says: 'To me, the portrait is about constantly challenging myself to become a better version of myself than I was yesterday – to always step into my true potential, to always pull others up along with me and to always work towards a bigger, higher cause.'

'I hope that young women and men will draw inspiration from the Higher Self portrait to live their best life while being of service to others.'

About 21 Icons

21 Icons is a photo and film project about South African icons. The third season icons are all under the age of 35. You can engage with 21 Icons on Twitter, [@21Icons](#), or with the hashtag [#OurFutureIsNow](#).

For more coverage, check out our stories on the third season so far:

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- [Jolynn Minnaar](#)
- [Kyle Shepherd](#)
- [Phindile Sithole-Spong](#)
- [Ashley Uys](#)
- [Michaela Mycroft](#)
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- [Thato Kgathanye](#)
- [Laduma Ngxokolo](#)
- [Catherine Constantinides](#)
- [Lucas Sithole](#)

- [Thulani Madondo](#)
- [Jes Foord](#)
- [Athi-Patra Ruga](#)
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