

# Agent of Change SA

## *An icon with beauty and social awareness*

By KEISHA SINGH

**A beauty queen and activist who rubbed shoulders with influential leaders like Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and Bill Clinton is lending her voice to Africa and African issues. The former Miss Earth South Africa, Catherine Constantinides is a young eco-preneur, climate activist and food security advocate.**

She recently appeared on the show 21 Icons, a tribute to proactive leaders making a difference in the country and African continent. She described the experience as "unbelievable" as the show exposed her



Constantinides at the 2011 Rugby World Cup in New Zealand

to great leaders making a positive change for their nation.

"I met a great icon, January Mkamba, who recently ran for president in Tanzania. Meeting him and subsequently becoming his friend was a tremendous gift. The show exposed me to charismatic young leaders like these, who I can now learn and grow from."

Constantinides was selected for the show as she established numerous community outreach projects aimed at driving climate change. In addition she spearheaded initiatives aimed at showing the way forward for the next generation to aspire to be socially conscious and active citizens. As Miss Earth South Africa she brought important issues to the fore such as Climate Change and its affect on Africa. She worked at the Kruger National Park researching the illegal wildlife trade and the social reasons behind why people choose this way of life.

Constantinides has travelled across the world promoting sustainable community development, social entrepreneurship and food security through Generation Earth, of which she is the co-founder, an international youth leadership initiative that engages students and learners to discuss sustainable development, low carbon futures and resource management specifically in Africa. She said: "It is my duty as a global citizen in an interconnected world to engage with people from all walks of life on important issues and find solutions where necessary."

She believes that more dialogue and leadership needs to be created within the climate change sphere.

The leader has a total of five awards to her name, including Top Woman in Business 2014 and the Enviropaedia Eco-Logic Youth Award 2013. As the Executive Director of LeadSA, she uses the platform to promote gender transformation and development in youth leadership.

"There has been a remarkable improvement in the number of woman making an impact and lending their voices in political, social and economic discourses," she said. Although she has embarked on initiatives around the world, Africa remains the continent she is most dedicated to.

Constantinides and her team work actively in schools and rural communities across the continent, whilst consulting with both government and private sectors. As a passionate African she believes that the challenges the people face need to be addressed urgently in order to look at more sustainable ways to uplift and grow the continent, moving Africa forward with an increased skill and educational transfer and an aligned focus on the development of Africa's agricultural sector and food security programmes.

The climate activist will be attending the biggest climate negotiation, COP21 in December in Paris, France. She concludes: "We need to teach people to dream and to hope because it's only when members of society believe in something greater than the circumstances they found themselves in, they become active citizens that achieve change."