

A Short Walk Into History



Kumi Naidoo and cameraman Daniel Snyders on the way to the photo shoot for this week's 21 Icons picture

Picture: ADRIAN STEIRN

Keeping a promise that his fight for justice will never end

Now head of Greenpeace, Kumi Naidoo has never given up the struggle

THEKISO ANTHONY LEFIFI

KUMI Naidoo, a social justice and environmental activist, once promised his friend and fellow comrade, the late Lenny Naidu, that he would spend the rest of his life fighting for a good cause. He was 22 at the time.

It followed a philosophical discussion about the difference between giving one's life to the struggle and giving away "the rest of your life".

It was one of the last discussions the young men had before they went into exile and on their separate paths.

Naidoo, now 48, still replays that conversation in his mind. And he has kept the promise.

Naidoo, whose 21 Icons portrait we publish this week, has lost a number of close friends along the way. "It could have been me rather than them," he said. According to him, it should be the moral responsibility of all those who survived to contribute positively.



THE 21 Icons project has captured the imagination of readers around the world. The Wall Street Journal reflected on last week's icon, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, left, in a blog, and Britain's Daily Mail reported on the launch of the project. Our article on De Bruyn ('The day 20 000 women said no to the dompas') did not appear in some editions last week owing to an error. You can find the article at www.timeslive.co.za/lifestyle under Sunday Times promotions.

Greenpeace International's first African director said the fight for economic and social justice had to carry on.

The 21 Icons project has produced portraits and short television documentaries of 21 South Africans who have made exceptional contributions to the lives of others or in their fields of endeavour.

Naidoo hopes that the project, created by photographer Adrian Steirn, inspires people to fight for justice.

For the photo shoot, Steirn had Naidoo standing in an inflatable boat surrounded by forest in Rondebosch, Cape Town. The image speaks of a man who would go to the end of the world to stand up for what he believes in.

"It says everything about him. He is an activist, a strong man — there for what he believes," said Steirn.

Fifty percent of the proceeds from the sale of his signed portrait will be go to Greenpeace

Africa and the remainder to Food and Trees for Africa, which promotes climate-change action, food security and sustainable natural resource use and management.

A short documentary about Naidoo will be shown on SABC3 at 6.57pm.

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DNA tests may reveal oysters' battle for survival

BOBBY JORDAN

SOUTH Africans love their wild oysters, but the delicacy on your plate may not be a local species.

There are at least two indigenous wild oyster species — the Cape rock oyster and a deeper-water species sometimes called the red oyster.

But for years scientists have monitored Japanese oysters farmed locally that have started growing wild in some South African rivers.

Stellenbosch University is conducting DNA tests on oysters along the coast to find out whether the local oyster species are holding off the invader. "We take tiny bits of the oyster tissue and test it in a genetics lab in Stellenbosch," said Sue Jackson, research associate at the university's botany and zoology department.

The results will hopefully shed light on oyster dynamics and help the government to set wild oyster quotas.

"We know so little about South African oysters. We don't know how big their populations are, or if there are different subspecies," said Jackson.

"We've worried for more than 10 years that Pacific [Japanese] oysters might grow wild in South Africa."

The results so far suggest that the foreign oyster does not last long outside estuaries because of South Africa's rough but rich coastal waters, in which local species thrive. Oyster farmers rely on the Japanese oyster because of its rapid growth rate. Oysters dished up at restaurants countrywide are therefore more likely to be the foreign variety, given that oyster farms supply the bulk of the trade.

Jackson said oysters were typically farmed in protected West Coast bays where they benefit from the Atlantic Ocean's nutrient-rich water.

But the Stellenbosch research shows that local wild oysters may also be suitable for aquaculture because of their impressive reproduction rates. Oyster connoisseurs say they taste better too, although opinion differs depending on how much champagne is involved.

Jackson said more research was needed to establish the farming potential of the local oysters.

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