

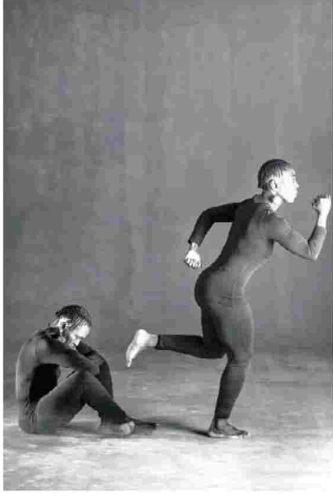


### The Storyteller

#### Gcina Mhlophe

Guga S'thebe Art & Crafts Heritage Centre, Langa township, Cape Town, November 16, 2013

This portrait is an interpretation of a woman who carries her stories with her. It conveys her love of the traditional oral narrative, as well as writing and reading, and reflects her philanthropic work as an ambassador for literacy.



### The Athlete

#### Evelina Tshabalala

Zonnebloem Studios, Cape Town, October 12, 2013

Tshabalala is someone who, no matter what life throws at her, gets back up and carries on stronger than ever. This is what the portrait sought to capture. Its double exposure required a different lighting set-up for each exposure to ensure the final image was correctly balanced.

# 'We entered the Holy Grail'

THE 1950s are a blot on South Africa's history. The decade represents the enforcement of the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, the Land Tenure Act, the Bantu Education Act – legislation that strips basic civil rights from the majority of the South African population. There is more. The Population Registration Act restricted the movement of black people and led to an abusive enforcement of the law.

There was a tipping point, of course, but mass resistance was met with force. Something needed to be done. Sophia Williams-de Bruyn took her place at the head of 20 000 women and made a stand.

Arm in arm, defiant, she marched at the head of the throng with three other leaders – Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Albertina Sisulu. She was barely 18.

"They came in a disciplined manner, courageously climbing the steps of the Union Buildings," Williams-de Bruyn remembers. "Indian women wore their saris; the ANC Women's League wore their black, green and gold; there were those in their everyday wear and there were those from rural areas in traditional dress. Imagine that colourful array of women climbing those steps."

Williams-de Bruyn is the last surviving leader of that march on apartheid. She was born in 1938, in Korsten in Port Elizabeth (it no longer exists).

The Korsten community relied on Williams-de Bruyn's father, Henry, to write their letters to the white bureaucracy about grants and pensions. Henry Williams became the voice of the largely illiterate community. He had no idea his daughter would take service to the next level.

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# Images capture essence of ubuntu

With portraits by Adrian Steirn, the book *21 Icons South Africa* is a celebration of the lives of South Africans who shaped the world around them. Among them are these seven women whom we celebrate on Heritage Day

PHOTOGRAPHER Adrian Steirn, who came from Australia to live in South Africa, was inspired by the legacy of Madiba to celebrate, through the lens of his camera, the most important generation of South Africans in history.

The result of the project he undertook with creative director Harriet Pratten is *21 Icons South Africa*, which contains powerful black-and-white images and the personal stories of 21 men and women as varied as the Rainbow Nation.

They range from those who navigated South Africa out of the darkness of apartheid to life-saving crusaders, inspirational artists and others fighting to conserve South Africa's rich natural and cultural heritage.

There is FW de Klerk in the lotus position, Professor Phillip Tobias before his death, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu with a tutu and Nelson Mandela's last portrait sitting.

Steirn's portraits display a unique, trusting exchange of energy between a photographer and his subjects, capturing the essence of these incredible stalwarts with creative wit and due respect.

The book is in large, coffee-table format, measuring 28cm by 35cm and is a collector's item that would be ideal as a gift.

In the foreword, Tutu says the *21 Icons* project is "a gift to our nation on the occasion of the 20th year since achieving our hard-earned democracy, one that reflects the charm, humility and sincerity of South Africa's remarkable people".

He says Steirn has managed to capture "the essence of ubuntu latent in the spirits, smiles and efforts of these people".

**Title:** *21 Icons South Africa*

**Publisher:** Quivertree Publications

**Price:** R675



### The Heroine

#### Sophia Williams-de Bruyn

The Union Buildings, Pretoria, March 4, 2012

Williams-de Bruyn kneels among the roses in the gardens of the Union Buildings – the very place upon which she marched almost 60 years ago. In her hands, she holds a Bible, which is symbolic of the marchers' plan to kneel in prayer if officials attempted to break up the protest. On August 9, 1956, she led the march of 20 000 women on the Union Buildings, along with Lillian Ngoyi, Albertina Sisulu and Helen Joseph, to protest against the requirement that women must carry pass books. She is the last living leader of the march.

The labour force of the Port Elizabeth Van Lane textile factory was made aware of her strength and courage early on.

"My activism started when I was still at school," she says. "During the holidays I would work at the factory for pocket money. But I soon became a voice for the workers because they couldn't articulate their issues and they would use me to go to the bosses.

"I became more and more involved – it was part-time work until I left school. Then I became permanently involved, and was made a shop steward and elected to the executive of the Textile Workers' Union."

Williams-de Bruyn's work with the union brought her close to leaders like Vuyisile Mini and Govan Mbeki. Her momentum gathered, driving her deeper into the struggle against injustice and apartheid.

She was a founder member of the South African Congress of Trade Unions and organised the Coloured People's Congress to assist the ANC in grappling with apartheid legislation. She cultivated a presence and a powerful style of leadership, understated but firm.

Imagine confronting then prime minister JG Strijdom in 1956. You are part of a marginalised, mistreated race group, often ruled with violence. You are 18 years old. "Ironically, I didn't feel scared," she says. "I think I felt more excitement, and, yes, I felt proud and I felt very encouraged. There was safety in numbers."

The women had a contingency plan in case of resistance. A second layer of leadership was lined up behind the linked arms of Joseph, Ngoyi, Sisulu and Williams-de Bruyn. Should the police harass the front-line leadership, the plan

was for the second tier to cover them and lead the 20 000-strong mass to bend and pray. "The group would cover the situation in prayer. The police would have to arrest the whole group," she explains.

While the group stood at the steps of the Union Buildings, respectful of the manicured lawns and pampered gardens, the leaders entered the halls in search of the prime minister. But Strijdom had no mind to receive this defiant act.

"Lillian Ngoyi returned and announced to the mass that we had gone to see Strijdom and that we had delivered the petitions," Williams-de Bruyn remembers. But Strijdom wasn't present, he avoided the women. "He's not here, he ran away from you," Ngoyi said to the crowd. "He was scared of you and he ran away" And with that the women burst into song.

The women of the 1956 march achieved what they had set out to do. "At that time, you couldn't just walk around the Union Buildings, especially not black women," she explains. "Ordinary people could not walk in there, lounge around, have a picnic, rest there. It was never heard of. And so that day was complete. We entered the Holy Grail and it was cheeky to have dared to enter the domain of the Union Buildings."

By 1963, her husband, Henry de Bruyn, was in exile in Lusaka. She joined him several years later. While in exile, Williams-de Bruyn realised the need to attend to her education, which she had sacrificed for the struggle. She enrolled for evening studies and graduated with a diploma in education.

By 1980 she was one of the founder members of the ANC Education Council in Lusaka, and was responsible for the education and training of ANC cadres.

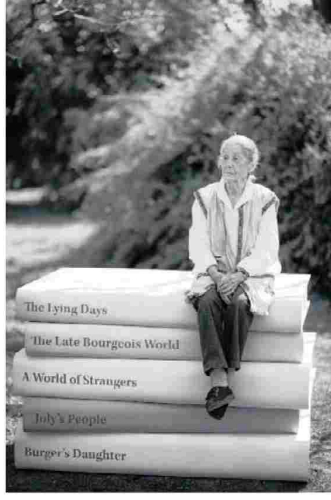


### The Princess

#### Yvonne Chaka Chaka

Hyde Park High School, Joburg, April 30, 2010

Seemingly daydreaming, Chaka Chaka sings into a broomstick pretending it's a microphone, as she did as a child. In the background, a tiara rests atop the piano in reference to the nickname "Princess of Africa" bestowed upon her by Nelson Mandela.



### The Writer

#### Nadine Gordimer

Her home in Parktown, Joburg, November 28, 2011

Gordimer sits on top of a pile of her own works looking demure, but strong, in her garden. The gigantic books are symbolic of her immense contribution to literature and South Africa. In recognition of this, Gordimer was awarded the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature.