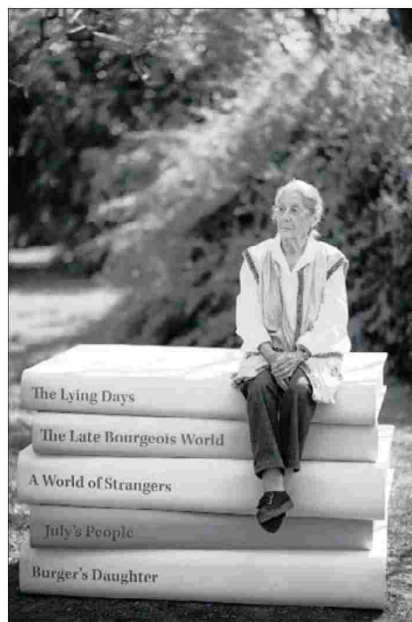




THE HEALER

LILLIAN CINGO
Noah Community Centre, Kliptown, Joburg, June 20, 2012

Against all odds, Cingo rose to the top of her profession. She was twice nominated Nurse of the Year in London during the 1970s. In 1975 she was presented to Queen Elizabeth as the best neurosurgical nurse in London. The image pays homage to the nobility of nursing.



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.



THE ARTIST

MMAPULA MMAKOGOBA HELEN SEBIDI
Her home in Parktown, Joburg, June 21, 2012

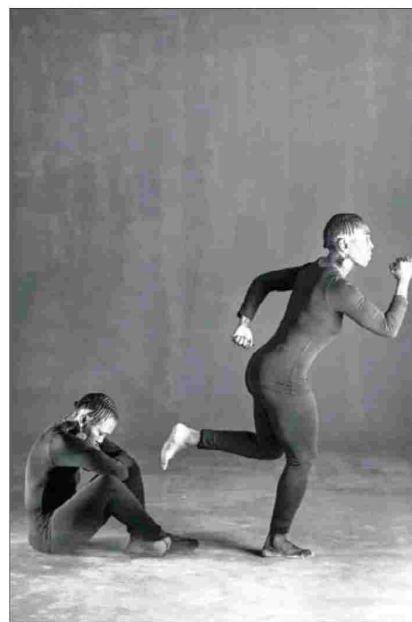
Sebidi is enveloped by her work, demonstrating the link between herself and her work and the deeply spiritual relationship she has with her vocation. The life history of the struggle of this consummate artist stands as a metaphor for our collective struggle to define ourselves as a nation.



THE PRINCESS

YVONNE CHAKA CHAKA
Hyde Park High School, Joburg, April 30, 2010

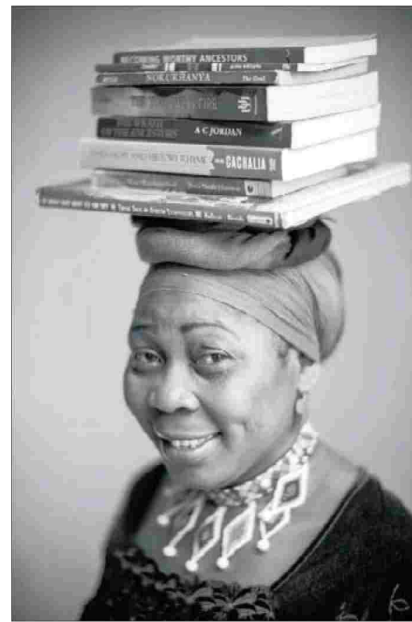
Seemingly daydreaming, Chaka Chaka sings into a broomstick pretending it's a microphone, as she did as a child. In the background, a tiara rests atop the piano in reference to the nickname "Princess of Africa" bestowed upon her by Nelson Mandela.



THE 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.



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.

'We entered the Holy Grail'

This excerpt from '21 Icons' looks in detail at the life of the last living leader of the Women's Day March on 9 August 1956

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 regarding grants and pensions. Henry Williams became the voice of the largely illiterate community. He had no idea his daughter would take community service to the next level.

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 (Sactu) 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 frontline 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 her education, which she had sacrificed for the



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 their 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.

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. Then she was deployed to the United Nations Institute for Namibia to assist in building the capacity of Swapo cadres in administration and secretarial skills.

In 1984, she established a project that contributed to the preparation and development of ANC members in exile. Many of these individuals now hold senior positions in government, parastatals and the private sector.

The early 1990s presented a transient period for the ANC as it merged its exiled members with an administrative base on home soil. Williams De Bruyn held senior positions until accompanying her husband as the first ambassador to Jordan.

With the incredible respect garnered through a lifetime dedicated to the party, it was no

surprise that Williams De Bruyn was appointed deputy Speaker in the Gauteng Legislature in 2005.

She went on to serve as a human resources manager and a commissioner at the Commission for Gender Equality, and represented the national executive committee of the ANC Women's League.

Today, as Williams De Bruyn remembers the march, she sits, hands clasped, resting on her lap. For a moment she seems distant, as if she is reliving the past. She turns to speak. "I don't think words can express how I feel," she says.

"I remember that – as we the women who were sitting there, were positioning ourselves – I felt a lump in my throat.

"I looked at this large army of women. Dignified women. Courageous women. And I felt so humbled to be a part of such bravery, an act that encouraged the greater Struggle.

"The song we sang that day, *Bathindi Bafasi*, warned that if you strike a woman, you strike a rock."