

Global icon still an inspiration to young South Africans

NELSON Mandela continues to be the biggest inspiration in the world among young people in particular. “I admire young people who are concerned with the affairs of their community and nation perhaps because I also became involved in struggle while I was still at school,” he once said. “Whenever I am with energetic young people, I feel like a recharged battery.” The global icon was an inspiration behind the SABC3 short-film series, *21 Icons*.

Since its launch in 2013, the celebrated series has documented a wide spectrum of South African personalities ranging from revered freedom fighters like Ahmed Kathrada and Mandela himself to unheralded heroes and heroines such as wheelchair-bound tennis champion Lucas Sithole and javelin/discus/shot-put thrower Zanele Situ.

The essence of the show is to chronicle the history of South Africa through the eyes of these

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inspirational personalities – from its struggle for freedom (*A Journey to Freedom*) through the democratic phase (*The Promise of Freedom*) and eventually a vision of the future (*A Future of a Nation*).

The third season – under way since last spring – sheds the spotlight on young visionaries and achievers.

Those who have been watching the series will recall names such as Cape Town-born jazz pianist Kyle Shepherd, 28, Limpopo scientist, inventor and entrepreneur Ludwick Marishane, 25 and Thulani Madondo, 25, caregiver and community builder from the



Watch *21 Icons*' profile of Caster Semenya, 24-year-old middle distance runner and world champion, today at 7.27pm on SABC3.

informal settlement of Kliptown, Johannesburg.

Cape Town-based

photojournalists Adrian Steirn and Gary van Wyk are the brains behind *21 Icons* – whose name derives from the fact that each season has profiled 21 personalities

It's a unique documentary series that combines film, photography, fine art portraits and a narrated script. Images of the first two seasons were shot in black and white. This classic feel has since made way for colour film for the third season with the younger member of the team, Van Wyk, 34, taking over the role of principal portrait photographer from Steirn.

Van Wyk began his photographic journey at Independent Newspapers as an intern. His eye for images saw him quickly graduating to the role of full-time photographer.

Since then his vivid and evocative images have been published in several local and international media brands – earning him accolades along the way.

Some of the iconic subjects he has had the privilege to photograph up close and personal include Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Oprah Winfrey.

Well-travelled, he has worked in diverse locations ranging from the snow-capped Himalayas to the tropical rainforests of the Amazon.

According to the series' producers, the transition from the classic black-and-white to colour photography is a tribute to the energy and vision of young achievers who are profiled in season three.

● Watch *21 Icons*' profile of Caster Semenya, 24-year-old middle distance runner and world champion, today at 7.27pm on SABC3.

She was selected for her international athletic achievements and inspirational life of never giving up despite hardships. The episode will repeat tomorrow at 5.57pm on the same channel.