



SA has survived incredible peaks and troughs in its transformation journey, with icons like Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and the late former President Nelson Mandela playing enduring roles. However, the big question is: are we living up to their legacies?

TAKING STOCK

As SA reflects on two decades of democracy, we ask our cover stars to comment on the strides we've made – through the lens of their personal stories

THE PERSONAL

WALKING THE TALK

When Felicia Mabuza-Suttle started broadcasting her award-winning, first panel discussion show, *Top Level* (eventually renamed *The Felicia Show*) on SABC1 in 1991, she was subjected to a gruelling recording schedule of four to five shows per weekend to meet the public broadcaster's budgetary constraints.

"It wasn't about money for me, but about the passion for getting our people talking and involved. Many people think the show made me rich, but it really didn't," she says. As Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool has described it, the show became a "weekly mass counselling session for South Africans on how to reach out and forgive during our time of transformation".

"I remember shows where we urged people to go and vote and had experts explaining the power of the vote. We were able to interview [then] President Nelson Mandela a dozen times and many politicians from nearly all the political parties, authors and educators wanted to come on to discuss the new democratic process. There was immeasurable excitement and interest in dialogue," she recalls.

Although now based in the USA, where she runs corporate training company Leadership Success International with her husband, Dr Earl Suttle and hosts *Conversations With Felicia* on the Africa Channel, her passion for contributing to the liberation dialogue

in SA hasn't diminished.

Come June, she plans to host the 2014 Youth Inspiration Roadshow around the country – a series of events aimed at young South Africans that will expand on her soon-to-be-released book, *Live Your Dream*.

"There's still a lot more to do to ensure the next generation takes our country to the next level. I hope I'll be able to motivate young people to dare to dream big." It's an art she says she perfected as a child.

"I would drive with my dad, sister and brother around the suburbs of Johannesburg, playing this game where we'd shout: 'I'm pick!' at all the houses we liked. But I was truly visualising how I was going to live in one of those homes one day.

Felicia Mabuza-Suttle



I'd visualise living by the ocean, with the waves gushing against the walls of my house – and I made sure, when I lived in Cape Town, that I *did* live near the water. I wake up and see it every morning when I'm there."

Mabuza-Suttle's frustrated by young people who seem to have far-fetched dreams about "being Beyoncé or that other one who likes to twerk so much".

"I speak to young girls and they all want to be models and singers. What happened to academics? Education is key – without it, I think our kids are going to falter.

"I say to all of us BEE benefactors: raise somebody. I know some of us are doing that, but you can never do enough. And I'm not even asking that you use your money: mentor them and give people hope. Many argue that only a few are enjoying the fruits of wealth in the new SA. The black masses still live in dire poverty and I detect a sense of hopelessness and sadness in most of the emails and tweets I receive from young people. So I'm embarking on this inspirational Youth Roadshow to re-energise and inspire our youth. They're our future."

PAMODZI'S LESSONS

"Pamodzi Investment Holdings has changed focus in the last year to comply with market demands," says Mabuza-Suttle. "Responding to a call for job creation from our government, we've made a shift from being an investment holding company to creating companies where we're involved operationally and the focus is on the infrastructure, energy, agriculture and industrial manufacturing sectors. We've also broadened our operations to other parts of the continent.

"Pamodzi continues to be a shining star in black economic development in our country. As one of its founding members and major shareholders, I'm able to assist some young people, including family, with their studies and help them venture into their entrepreneurial endeavours."

CAPTURED ON FILM

Connie Masilo-Ferguson has mapped the progress of the country's democracy through the various stages of her career. She remembers the days of the language silos on TV and the launch in 1994 of CCVTV, which allowed languages to be mixed on screens for the first time.

"This was just before *Generations* was launched," she recalls. "It was one of the beautiful things that happened during that time because minds were starting to shift. Every other drama series I'd done until then was either purely Setswana or isiZulu. When CCVTV was launched and languages were finally mixed, we were called the 'Super Eight'. I was the Setswana presenter," she laughs.

Then came the elections and the voting queues snaking around suburbs and parks.

"*Generations* was flighted for the first time in early 1994, shortly before Madiba became President. The cast actually got to meet him soon after he assumed office. There were many good things happening; those were really exciting times."

She notes that the TV industry started changing markedly after that. "Before then, men would be cast in the leading roles of TV dramas. It was the same in *Generations*, with females just adding beauty and in supporting roles.

"As time wore on, though, the main characters in *Generations* all became women. It was a game-changing series because it portrayed black people in a way they'd never seen themselves before. The characters were both inspirational and aspirational. People wanted to look like that; they really believed Karabo Moroka was a spoilt brat who built herself up to become somebody and something. They started believing it was possible for them too," she says.

"If you've been told you can never amount to

anything and that you'll always have a white boss, you aspire to becoming the boss's secretary. That's your biggest aspiration. You never think: 'What if I were the boss and could *have* a secretary?'" She says *Generations* encouraged this mind-shift – and sees proof of that even today from the masses of fan mail she continues to receive from people who followed in the footsteps of the fictional characters.

But while racial integration on screen had its merits, Masilo-Ferguson says the operational aspects of the industry continue to be challenging. Having recently set up Ferguson Films with her husband, Shona, they've found funding to be a perennial headache, even if it's easier to source than it was a decade ago.

"However, there are many more black producers – and that's something to celebrate. When I started in the industry, most production houses were predominantly white and you'd only have black assistants or writers here and there. Black people in the production team were the performers, while everyone else – the entire crew – would be white. Now crews are a nice mix and there are many more black children studying film and becoming professionals in the industry."

"I FEAR REVERSE APARTHEID"

"Everybody got to reflect on our democracy with Madiba's passing and we've come a long way. But that doesn't mean we are where we're supposed to be," says Masilo-Ferguson. "A lot still has to be done – there's always a danger of regressing. Everybody must keep their heads firmly on their shoulders and look back at what Madiba did for this country – and what his comrades and Mama Winnie and everyone else did for it, and the positives that came out of it. If we can move forward with that legacy, then we stand a fighting chance. But if, for whatever reason, we discard what all those heroes worked for, we'll be in trouble. The worst thing that could happen to this country is reverse racism; reverse apartheid. Racism can also be black on white, or it can be tribalism – black-on-black prejudice.

"The sooner we realise that as Africans, we're one people, the better it will be for the country and the continent."

THE PROFESSIONAL

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Sonja de Bruyn Sebotsa was 23 when she began her career at Deutsche Bank in London and just 29 when she became its Vice-President, having worked in its Tokyo and Johannesburg offices. But being the first black woman in the bank's corporate finance team had its sweats.

"I don't know if the challenge was more around race or gender, because I was also the only woman in a male-dominated environment. I probably felt the gender pressure more, because banking can be quite macho: the jokes and screensavers – that whole bravado culture," she says.

When she struck out on her own to help found women-led investment firm Identity Partners in 2008, the gender constraint was replaced by one centred on risk. "They say women are more risk-averse, so this was a big issue for us. The decision and the courage to become an entrepreneur and the mental commitment needed were huge," she recalls.

Sebotsa's perseverance has paid off handsomely, with the firm recently being named one of the empowerment partners in the Passenger Rail Agency of SA's R51 billion fleet renewal project. The agreement's still being fine-tuned, but she says it's heartening to see such strong women participating in the infrastructure space. Milestones like these, she says, can't be discounted as SA enters its third decade of democracy. "We like to go where you don't normally find women, so that's been a great opportunity for us. Also, the fact that there's such a high proportion of localisation – 65% of the project – presents a great opportunity for South African entrepreneurs to be in that supply chain."

Speaking more broadly, Sebotsa says she's concerned about many smart ideas being abandoned by entrepreneurs because of a dire lack of funding.

"It's those smart businesses that will create jobs and become leaders of the economy. For that, we need smart kids and innovators. You get that kind of atmosphere at the USA's Massachusetts Institute of Technology or the Harvard Tech Hub, for

Connie Masilo-Ferguson



Sonja de
Bruyn Sebotsa



THE BENEFITS OF BEE

"One of the benefits of BEE which is often overlooked is the fact that when people are able to participate as shareholders, they get a different vantage point for engaging with the company. Affirmative action and employment equity legislation both had their benefits, as did our procurement legislation, but what BEE brought was a voice: a seat at the table with other shareholders and the ability to help direct the company," says Sebotsa.

"Secondly, SA in general was quite insulated and isolated. We weren't part of the global financial community or economy. BEE helped transform and modernise the economy beyond a racial context. Think of how the Public Investment Corporation pushed for better corporate governance. Now we're quite far ahead in terms of corporate governance, but before, we were archaic and old-fashioned – which wasn't good for shareholder value.

"In the same way, we were able to bring in new technologies and gain access to new markets. Some South African companies, like SAB and MTN, are world leaders in their spheres. If we weren't part of a transforming society and a transforming economy, we don't know whether that would have happened."

instance. We need to create a whole cluster where people are full of ideas and can get early-stage funding and access to angel investors and venture capital investing. We're proud of our large corporates, but they all started somewhere.

"We need more investment in early-stage businesses. That will help solve many of our society's challenges."

DEFINING MOMENTS

Wendy Luhabe is measured and methodical when she talks about the "bridge generation" from which she comes. And her voice doesn't waver in the least when she explains why she

believes young people today are failing their peers.

"I always define our generation as the bridge between the old and the new. We were the last generation to experience the real brutality of the apartheid system in its severest form and the first generation to shape our democracy. So we felt a greater sense of responsibility for planting seeds that would hopefully shape the kind of democracy we wanted for SA."

For her, this meant a groundbreaking focus on social entrepreneurship, a career (or perhaps a calling) she adopted in the early Nineties, more than a decade before it became fashionable. But get Luhabe started on the subject of young people today and the rose-tinted vision disappears.

"What's clear is that the generation who came after us don't feel the same sense of responsibility we did. Maybe it's not in our culture. There could be a number of reasons for that. In attempting to redress the imbalances of the past, I suspect we've created a culture of entitlement that somehow doesn't co-exist with a culture of accountability.

"Secondly, I think we've underestimated the consequences of being products of an oppressive system. I don't think we fully

understand its impact on our perceptions of ourselves, what we're capable of, what we deserve and what our potential is in the world. That's a conversation which hasn't been fully explored.

"Thirdly, I think black people are lazy; we should just come to terms with that. People who succeed in life are those who go the extra mile. Maybe I'm using laziness as a metaphor for mediocrity. In my view, people who are comfortable with mediocrity are lazy. Being exceptional requires discipline, hard work and sacrifice. We have to demand more of ourselves." Impactful, important words from a woman who's consistently demanded more of herself and from the many women she continues to mentor.

Luhabe says she believes Wiphold – of which she was a founder member – remains an enduring and profitable feature in the BEE landscape 20 years on because of its generous vision.

"It was in the early Nineties and there were various discussions between the ANC leadership and black business to prepare us to play a meaningful role in the economy. Men were organising themselves and forming groups like Nail and Real Africa, but women were being excluded. I saw this as an invitation to do something for ourselves. As founders, we felt very strongly that if women became financially independent, it would shift the balance of power. We were motivated by recognising ourselves as catalysts for the greater participation of South African women in that vision. And it wasn't a vision confined only to the founders, which has been the case with many subsequent groups of women," she says.

Foremost among the challenges they encountered was the need to overcome gender prejudice.

"Three of the founders came from the financial services sector, but not the investment sector, so it was foreign territory in an industry that really didn't have women. We had to learn about the industry and were fortunate to be helped by a few white men, including Geoff Snelger, who gave us support, guided us and mentored us through the initial years. Twenty years later, Wiphold's outlived the first generation of empowerment companies. This year we celebrate two decades of empowering more than 300 000 women," she says.

Asked whether she has any regrets, Luhabe responds: "I wish that as women, we'd approached the participation of

women in the economy in a collaborative and collective way. Wiphold remains the only legitimate, broad-based empowerment success story. We should focus more on supporting the development of social entrepreneurship at university level and through the provision of an eco-system that's dynamic and effective."

THE POLITICAL

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Luhabe likes to call herself a nationalist. Not partial to any one political party, she says she plans to vote for "any party that will create a future for my grandchildren". "I'm beyond the sentiment of the Struggle and who contributed to my liberation. I think that dividend's been paid and we should move on and build a nation. That's really where we are. I'm not interested in keeping anyone in power who isn't performing," she adds.

However, she's quick to add that SA is a "much better country than it was 20 years ago. The quality of life, opportunities and options are much more accessible to a much wider base of South Africans. We can argue that some areas are better than others, but that's neither here nor there. Overall, we've made enormous strides, given what we inherited and where we started as a nation," she says.

The great disappointments for her have been the failure to provide quality education for all children and the fall-out of dealing with social imbalances through a welfare state, which is "proving to be dysfunctional and unsustainable".

"It's wiped out a whole generation of people who'll never be able to make a living for themselves. It's created a culture of entitlement which is totally unhealthy. It's eroded our ability to value work. I would have preferred us to find ways of equipping people to earn their own living. We should have thought of ways of exchange; there are many things that need to be done in communities. We could have given people grants in exchange for services like looking after the elderly and distributing medication to people who are HIV-positive," she says.

"We've destroyed the element of pride that I experienced when I was growing up in the apartheid era – and that's a travesty. In trying to help, we've done much greater damage which will take a long time to rectify."

She suggests ways of correcting this: diversifying the South African economy from its dependence on mining by developing a robust agricultural sector of small-scale farmers. "For a country with such large tracts of land, we haven't taken full advantage of its agricultural capability, which could employ millions of people and keep them where they are. We haven't developed areas outside cities; [instead], we've just become used to informal settlements within them. We're putting up with things that should be intolerable because we don't have the courage to make difficult decisions. We need to do some serious introspection and develop the ability to learn from our mistakes over the past 20 years," she says.

We also need to get more effective women in government, like Public Protector Thuli Madonsela, adds Luhabe.

"As a young democracy, SA needs young, visionary and courageous leaders who are able to put the country first and themselves last. I'm disappointed by the level of institutionalised corruption at all levels of society. We have an extremely low moral threshold and a fragile value system. We need to consolidate our individual contributions towards a collective and national effort.

"However, if you look at our balance sheet of democracy – the debits and credits – I have no doubt we've gained more than we lost. Disappointed as we are with many things that are failing in society, including institutionalised corruption, if we do a rigorous assessment and look at whether we've made a profit over the past 20 years, I think we have." **D**

PANDERING TO PREJUDICE

"Women have to give themselves permission to participate," says Luhabe. "Twenty years into our democracy, it's ridiculous to continue arguing that we're not being given opportunities. The policy environment exists and government supports it – I'm not sure quite what else needs to be done. Everything that needs to be in place is there – much more than in other parts of the world. Why aren't we running companies or the country? No-one's stopping any woman from doing anything. Democracy thrives when competent people demand to participate."

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Read personal accounts of how South Africans' lives have changed over the past 20 years.

Wendy Luhabe

