

THE UNVEILING OF *Mandisa*



Dr Judy Dlamini, Mrs Kari Greene, Alexandra Spencer, Mrs Mandisa Ntloko-Petersen, Mandisa Statue, Mrs Debbie Martin, Bahati Dakile

On Wednesday 12 October, as the Midlands sun cast its warm glow over the red-brick buildings, a remarkable unveiling took place in the beautifully manicured chapel garden: that of a life-sized bronze statue, Mandisa, honouring the first black girl who joined St Anne's in Grade 8 in 1981 and matriculated in 1985.

In her welcoming speech to guests, staff and pupils, our College Head, Debbie Martin, paid tribute to St Anne's journey since then, highlighting the "more intentional embracing, nurturing and relevant" focus of the school board, and indeed its entire community.

The exquisite statue, sculpted by established Balgowan artist, Sarah Richards, portrays a young St Anne's girl venturing tentatively forward as she acknowledges another student, perhaps, or a passer-by.

"Standing as she does beneath the St Anne's and the South African flags, she faces the rising sun, welcomes the new day, greeting, or maybe, bidding farewell to our Ladies in Blue. As with our other famous 'Annie' statue, proceeds from generous donations and the sale of maquettes of the statue will establish a bursary

fund for young women who may be daughters of facilities' staff and from the local Midlands community, who fulfil the criteria to attend the school, and would ordinarily not be able to take up the opportunity," - Debbie Martin.

The name Mandisa was fitting, she added, meaning "one who, by her presence, brings happiness" in isiXhosa.

She hoped Mandisa would "remind us of growing our understanding, our kindness and generosity, and that, as per the school's motto, 'deeds, not words, the cross, not force', are what count."

Special guest of honour was the history-maker Mandisa herself, now Mandisa Ntloko-Petersen. A parent of a Grade 9 pupil at the school, she said that she was overwhelmed by the privilege. With a BA in Industrial Relations from Wits, and an MBA from Warwick Business School in the UK, and a leading marketing specialist with experience both in South Africa and abroad, she said the statue epitomised the transformative journey of St Anne's.

However, she said "we should shift the focus to the future recipients of the Mandisa Bursary fund, and be cognisant of their backgrounds. There have always been huge disparities between public and private schools, and yes, improvements have been made over the past 28 years, but many inequalities still exist."

She appealed to our pupils to consider and embrace bursary recipients and others, who "could be from a rural background, foreign to this privileged lifestyle, who don't talk like you, dress like you, who may not arrive in a German sedan", and to provide them with guidance and friendship.

"You can help change their lives. When you invest in girls' education, you transform communities the world over... education is the passport to the future, tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

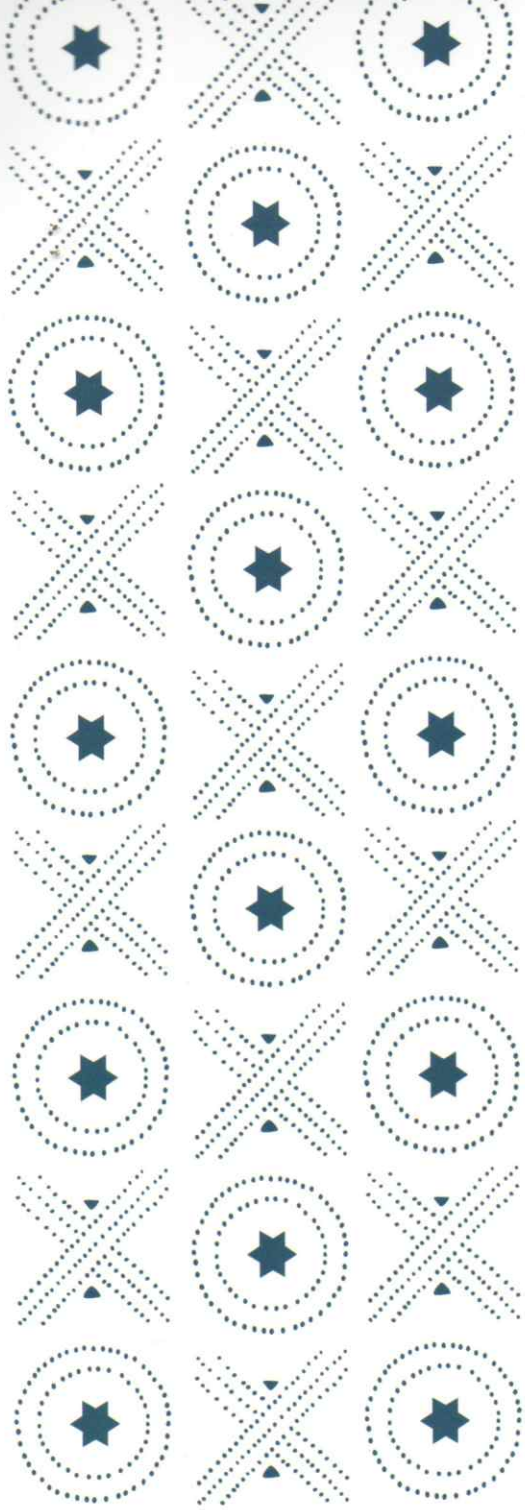
Dr Judy Dlamini, the second guest of honour, Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, medical doctor, author and philanthropist, said it was one thing to talk about diversity, "but deeds matter, not words".

"It is easy to talk about how transformed you are, but this unveiling says to a black child, 'I actually belong here'. If you don't embrace people, you will never get the best from them, and it is an honour being here today – at a school that truly embraces everyone by doing that... and feeling part of this family."

The late Karabo Che Mokoape, Hilton College's 2001 Head of School, the leader of that school's journey of transformation and governor of the Hiltonian Society, inspired the Mandisa project, an initiative spearheaded by the Ngikhona transformation committee, comprising staff and pupils, which became a reality through a very generous donation, for which St Anne's is truly appreciative.



Sculptor, Sarah Richards, with her nieces, Annabel and Molly Barnes



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