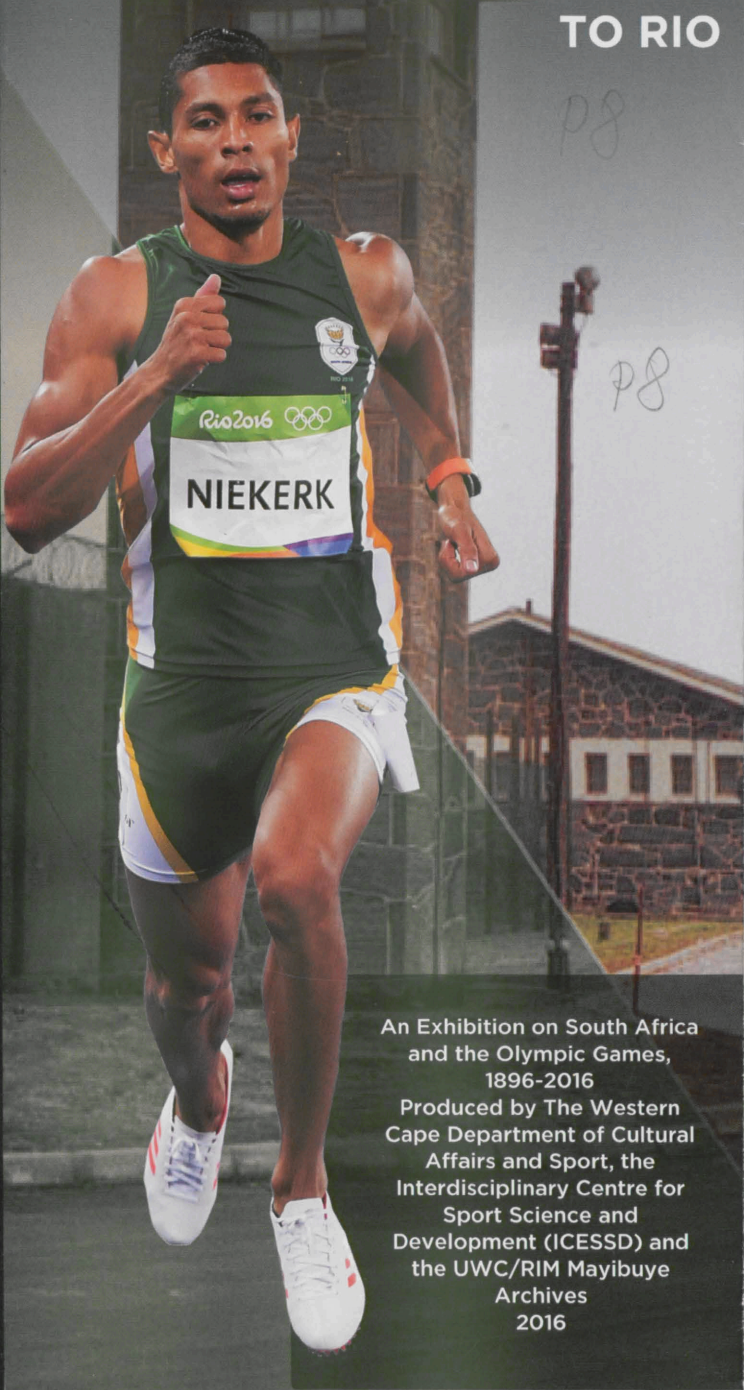


THE POWER OF THE DREAM:
FROM ROBBER ISLAND
TO RIO



An Exhibition on South Africa
and the Olympic Games,
1896-2016
Produced by The Western
Cape Department of Cultural
Affairs and Sport, the
Interdisciplinary Centre for
Sport Science and
Development (ICSSD) and
the UWC/RIM Mayibuye
Archives
2016

LAUNCH OF THE MODERN OLYMPICS



In August 2016 the 31st Olympic Games were held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Millions of people watched the best athletes in the world compete. South Africa's sensational Wayde van Niekerk and Mokgadi Caster Semenya made their childhood dreams come true by winning gold medals.

The Olympic Games originated in Greece more than two thousand years ago. Dedicated to the Olympian gods, they were staged on the ancient plains of Olympia. Athletics became part of a dream, an ideal. The Modern Olympic Games were revived by Pierre de Coubertin, a French historian and educator, in 1894 and the first games in their new form were held in Athens, Greece in 1896.

Today, the Olympics is the biggest sports event in the world with more than 200 countries participating every four years.

This exhibition reflects on South Africa's relationship to this global showpiece over the last 113 years.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST OLYMPIANS



South Africans first participated in the Games during the third Olympics of the modern era in St Louis in the USA in 1904. The Olympic Games were part of the World Trade Fair, a gigantic international fair held to attract international interest and investment.

Three athletes from South Africa competed unofficially and ran as individuals. Two of these Olympic pioneers were black South Africans who worked at the Trade Fair – Jan Mashiane and Len Taunyane. They ran in the marathon 'with ordinary working shirts, the sleeves rolled up, and knee-length trousers'. Mashiane had 'shoes and socks', but his partner ran barefoot. The two South Africans finished the marathon ninth and twelfth respectively.

The two athletes were among about 100 black South Africans who traveled to the USA around 1900, mainly to study and earn a living. They included famous leaders such as Charlotte Maxeke, Pixley ka Isaka Seme and John Dube.

THE OLYMPICS NOT FOR ALL

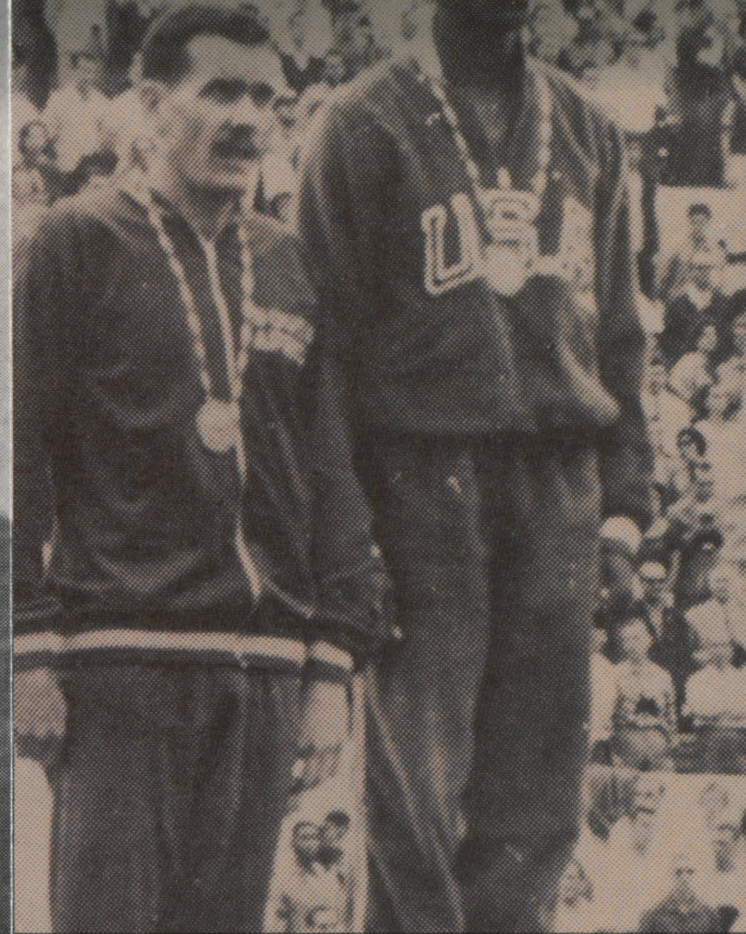


South Africa competed officially for the first time at the 1908 Olympics in London. At that time the British still controlled the various territories of southern Africa and it was decided that all the colonies should participate.

Reggie Walker won South Africa's first gold medal in the 100 meter sprint in 1908. Four years later in Stockholm Ken MacArthur and Charles Heffron came first and second in the marathon, the only time one country has filled the first two positions in that event.

The official South African teams were for white athletes only. In keeping with the ethos of colonialism under the British, black South African sportsmen and women were not allowed into the clubs, competitions and teams of the white colonists. The doors to the Olympics were shut to them. These athletes were not deterred and showed their love for sport by starting their own Inter-Town and Inter-Provincial cricket and rugby tournaments from 1885 while others left the country to pursue their passion. For example, Andrew Jephtha from Cape Town became British welterweight boxing champion in 1907, before going blind from his injuries.

SOUTH AFRICA'S 51 MEDALS IN 52 YEARS



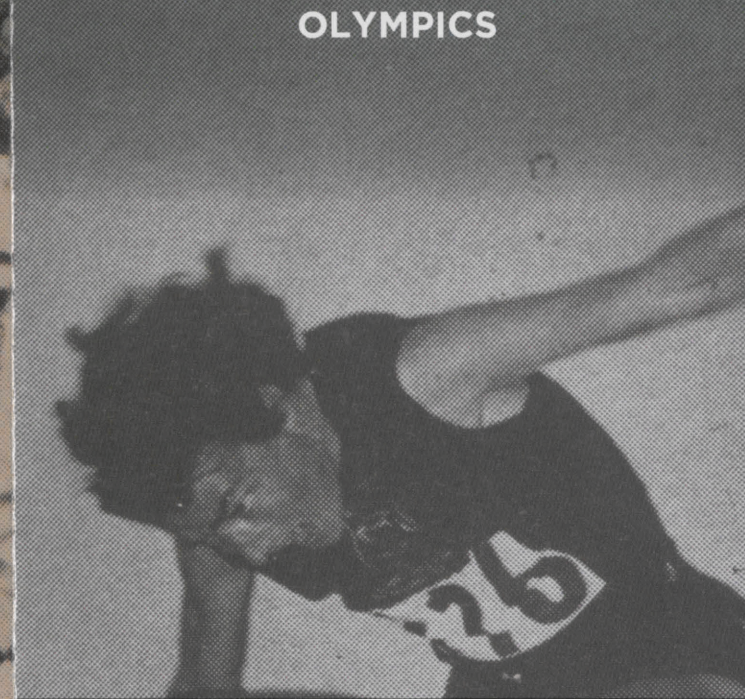
After London in 1908, South Africa took part in every one of the next ten Olympic Games until Rome in 1960.

South Africa won 16 gold, 15 silver and 20 bronze medals in those 52 years, achieving the most success in Antwerp in 1922 and Helsinki in 1952.

Racism had become a pillar of European colonialism from the 16th century and reached extreme forms through Nazism in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Hitler tried to use the 1936 Olympics in Berlin to demonstrate white supremacy.

Similarly, Apartheid was institutionalised in 1948. As a result the South African Olympic team remained 'whites-only'. Separation between people classified into different race groups was enforced in all spheres of life, including sport. Different race groups were not allowed to play sport together and development opportunities and sport facilities were mainly to benefit 'white sport'.

WOMEN, SPORT AND THE
OLYMPICS



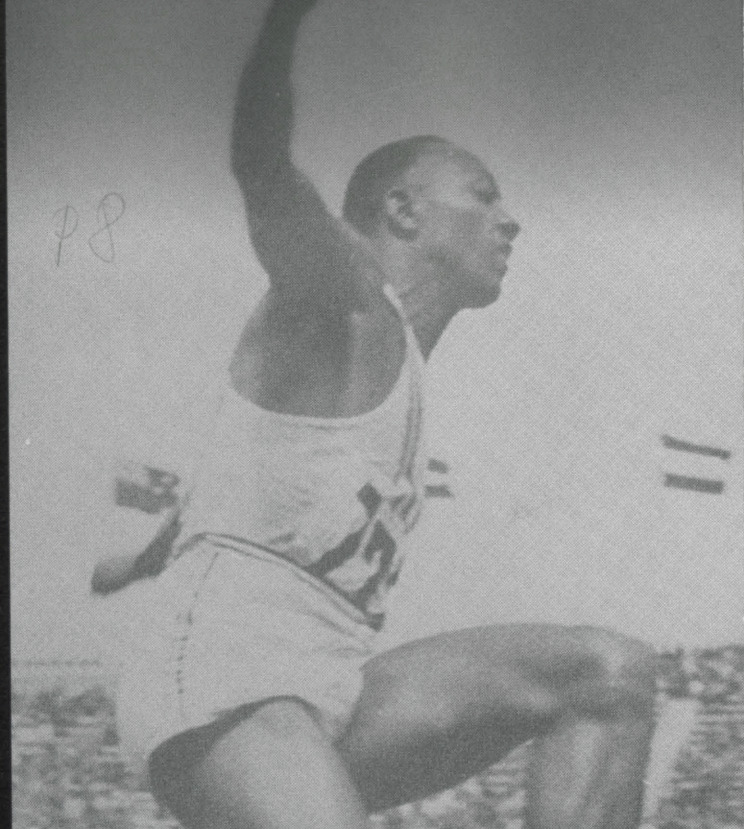
Racism in sport went hand in hand with another aspect of deep-seated institutionalised discrimination - sexism. The founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre De Coubertin, said it was 'against the laws of nature for women to do athletics'. Women's participation in the Olympics before World War 1 was restricted mainly to figure-skating and swimming. Women's athletics was regarded as a 'common' pursuit for women of a lower class and was excluded. Meanwhile women across the world had been campaigning for their right to vote and succeeded in some countries during the 1920s. The Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI) was started in 1921 and was successfully incorporated into the Olympic movement in 1925. In South Africa white women won the vote in 1930.

High-jumper Esther Brand and swimmer Joan Harrison were the first South African women to win gold medals at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, while the sprinter Daphne Hasenjager won a silver medal.

Black sportswomen in South Africa remained excluded and disenfranchised, facing the triple oppression of race, class and gender, but they also started participating in segregated leagues.

Today women are equal in the law but South Africa remains a patriarchal society (also in sport) and much is to be done before women experience equality. An improved understanding of past inequalities can speed up the transition to a non-sexist South Africa society and, therefore, a non-sexist sports sector.

APARTHEID – THE REAL HURDLE



Black South Africans continued to dream about participating at the highest level of sport despite the Olympics being for white sportspeople only.

African-American athlete, Jesse Owens, challenged the notion of a superior race when he won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Despite being a second-class citizen in his own country and Hitler refusing to shake his hand, Owens became a sporting role model for the future.

In South Africa, the apartheid government issued its first formal sports policy in 1956, forbidding inter-racial contests. A new wave of black sportspeople went abroad in search of opportunities. Weightlifter, Ronald William Eland, represented Britain at the Olympics. Jake Tuli won the Empire flyweight title. Steve 'Kalamazoo' Mokone and Albert Johannsen played professional soccer in Europe. The Samaai brothers competed at the Wimbledon tennis championship. Papwa Sewgolum won the Dutch Open in golf. Winty Pandle and Goolam Abed succeeded in the hard world of rugby league. Basil D'Oliveira played for the England cricket team and led them to victory in the Test match against Australia in 1968 with a score of 158 runs and Precious McKenzie won gold at the Olympics for his adopted rather than home country.

SANROC AND A
NEW OLYMPIC DREAM



Until 1959, South African sport was run by an all-white umbrella body, the South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (SAOCGA), which changed its name to South African Olympic and National Games Association (SAONGA) in 1961 when South Africa became a republic and left the Commonwealth.

In 1958, the South African Sports Association (SASA) was started to unite sportspeople who believed in non-racism and unity rather than apartheid and division. The black athletics, cycling, cricket, soccer, weight-lifting, tennis, softball, netball and baseball associations with a combined membership of 70 000 joined this Association.

From 1958 to 1961 SASA protested against discrimination in South African sport and also lobbied internationally. In 1962 the International Olympic Committee, acting on SASA's request, demanded that apartheid South Africa changes its discriminatory policies or face expulsion.

In 1963 SASA founded the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), which eventually became recognised internationally as a legitimate representative of the democratic sports bodies in South Africa despite being banned inside the country.

CHANGING WORLD - SOUTH AFRICA
EXPELLED FROM THE OLYMPICS, 1964



The Sharpeville Massacre of March 1960 began a new era of conflict and repression in South Africa. The government banned the ANC, PAC and other organisations, closing the avenues for peaceful opposition to apartheid. Thousands of people, including SANROC and SASA members, were detained and banned and the liberation struggle was forced underground. SASA had to suspend its activities and SANROC was forced into exile.

SANROC president, Dennis Brutus, was shot in the stomach and imprisoned on Robben Island after trying to leave the country in 1961 to lobby the International Olympic Committee for South Africa's exclusion from the Games. His successor John Harris was executed after planting a bomb in a sabotage attack at Johannesburg station.

Sam Ramsamy, Chris de Broglio and Sylvester Stein went into exile in London and continued the campaign to isolate apartheid sport from there. SANROC succeeded in getting South Africa expelled from the Olympic movement.

Preteroria-born Peter Hain helped to launch the international anti-apartheid sports movement which became a key part of the struggle against minority rule in the 1970s and 1980s.

THE OLYMPICS OF THE OPPRESSED:
SACOS AND ITS FIVE RINGS, 1970s
AND 1980s



In 1973 the internal anti-apartheid sports movement inside the country was re-launched when the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) was formed by those sports bodies who believed in non-racism and the principles of fair play in sport. The SACOS logo of five chains referenced the five rings of the Olympic movement, with the chains being symbolic of apartheid. While SACOS championed justice for sport in South Africa, the exiled SANROC mobilised international support.

"No normal sport in an abnormal society", was SACOS' central principle. While it recognised the principles of the Olympic Charter, the IOC and other international umbrella bodies, the Council would not seek formal recognition during Apartheid.

In the 1980s, the non-racial sports movement organised SACOS festivals which, like the Olympics, started with the lighting of a flame. These 'people's festivals of sport' also described as 'The Olympics of the Oppressed' were intended to lift the spirit of sports people and communities who bore the brunt of the system. Hosted in Cape Town, the first SACOS Festival was held in October 1982, with 21 sports codes participating, and the second in 1988 with 19 sports codes participating.

AN IMPRISONED SOCIETY:
ROBBEN ISLAND AND SPORT



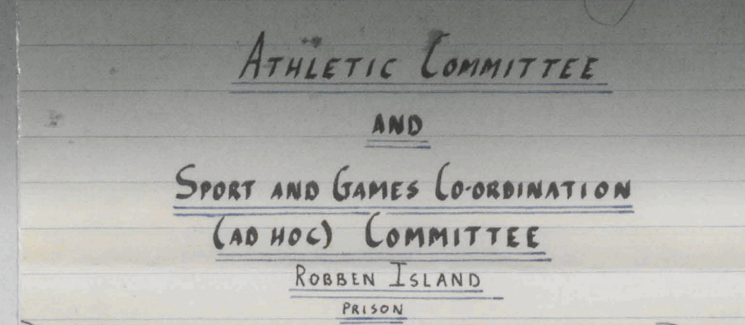
At the height of apartheid, with the majority of its citizens denied political rights and those fighting for democracy facing the might of the law, South Africa was an imprisoned society.

From the 1960s onwards, several thousand political prisoners were sent to the notorious Robben Island for opposing the system. Conditions were especially harsh so as to break their spirits. Instead the prisoners turned the island which had been a place of banishment for almost four centuries, into a place that became a universal symbol of freedom and human dignity.

They set up their own self-help education, political and recreation committees to organise and structure their lives as far as possible. Study became a key weapon and often people who went there without matric left with several degrees.

Sport also became very important in maintaining their morale and dignity, and in helping to transform a degrading space into something that represented what Ahmed Kathrada called 'the triumph of the human spirit'.

ROBBEN ISLAND GENERAL RECREATION
COMMITTEE



Resolution

Whereas the Officer Commanding

gave us permission to arrange Sport and

Competitions during the holiday season and to buy

refreshments,

And whereas the head of the Prison gave us ev

At first the prison authorities would not entertain the idea of prisoners playing sport, but after repeated requests, for preparation concessions were made and the first official games were allowed in 1967 under strict conditions.

When the prisoners asked for permission to buy a packet of sweets to present as a prize for a football match, the reply came back: 'Nie goedgekeur nie' (permission refused). The prison authorities often used permission as a bargaining or even blackmailing tool, but the prisoners persisted.

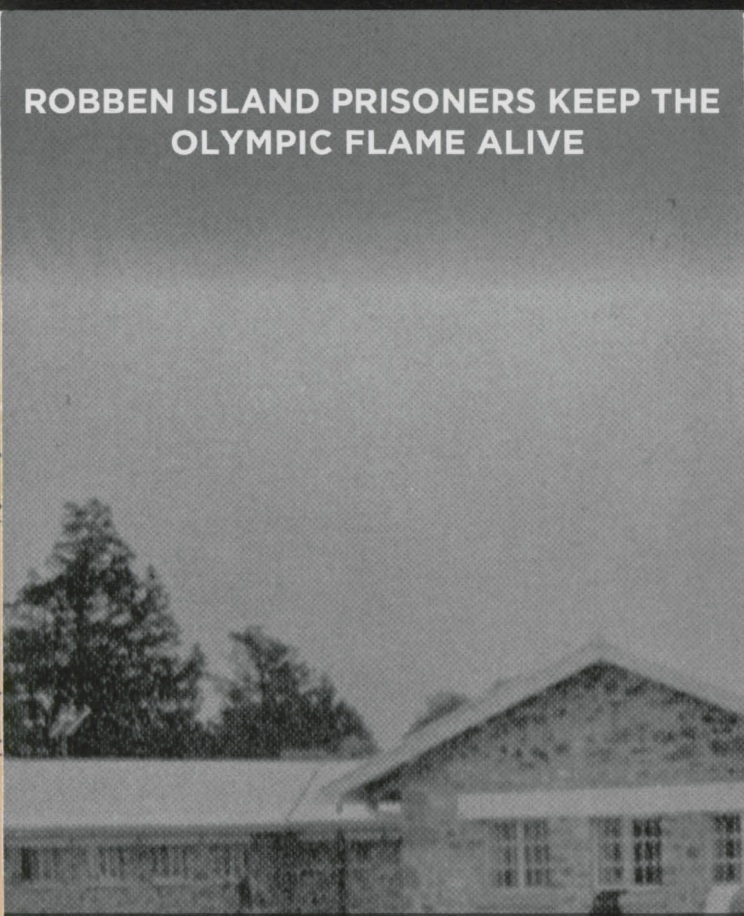
They gradually started leagues and clubs in various sports, and as the organisation grew they formed the co-ordinating General Recreation Committee. Its aim was to inculcate the spirit of sportsmanship and co-operation amongst the prisoners of Robben Island, negotiate with the prison authorities in a formal way and generally encourage and oversee sport on the island (the Prison).

The weekend sports contests were eagerly awaited and 'whoever scored on Saturday was the hero for the rest of the week'.

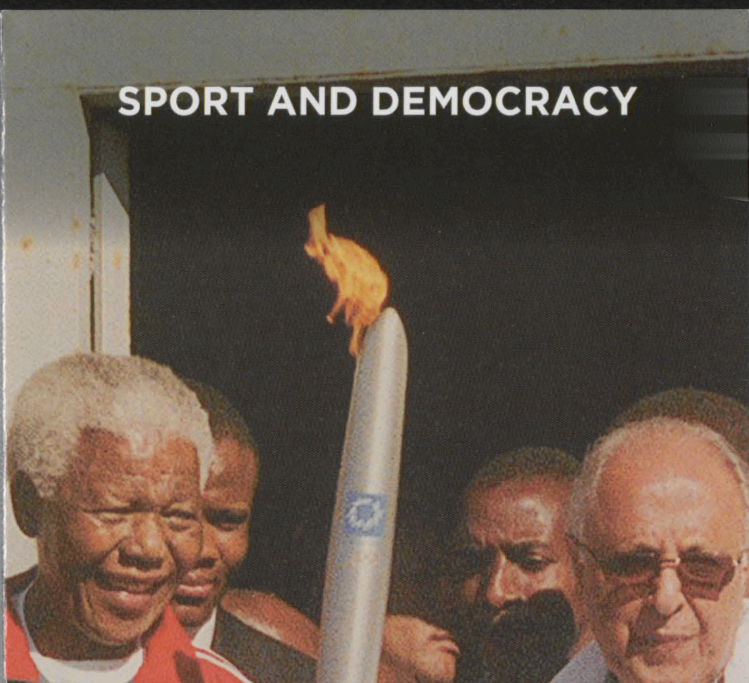
Therefore, barring the inconveniences attempted



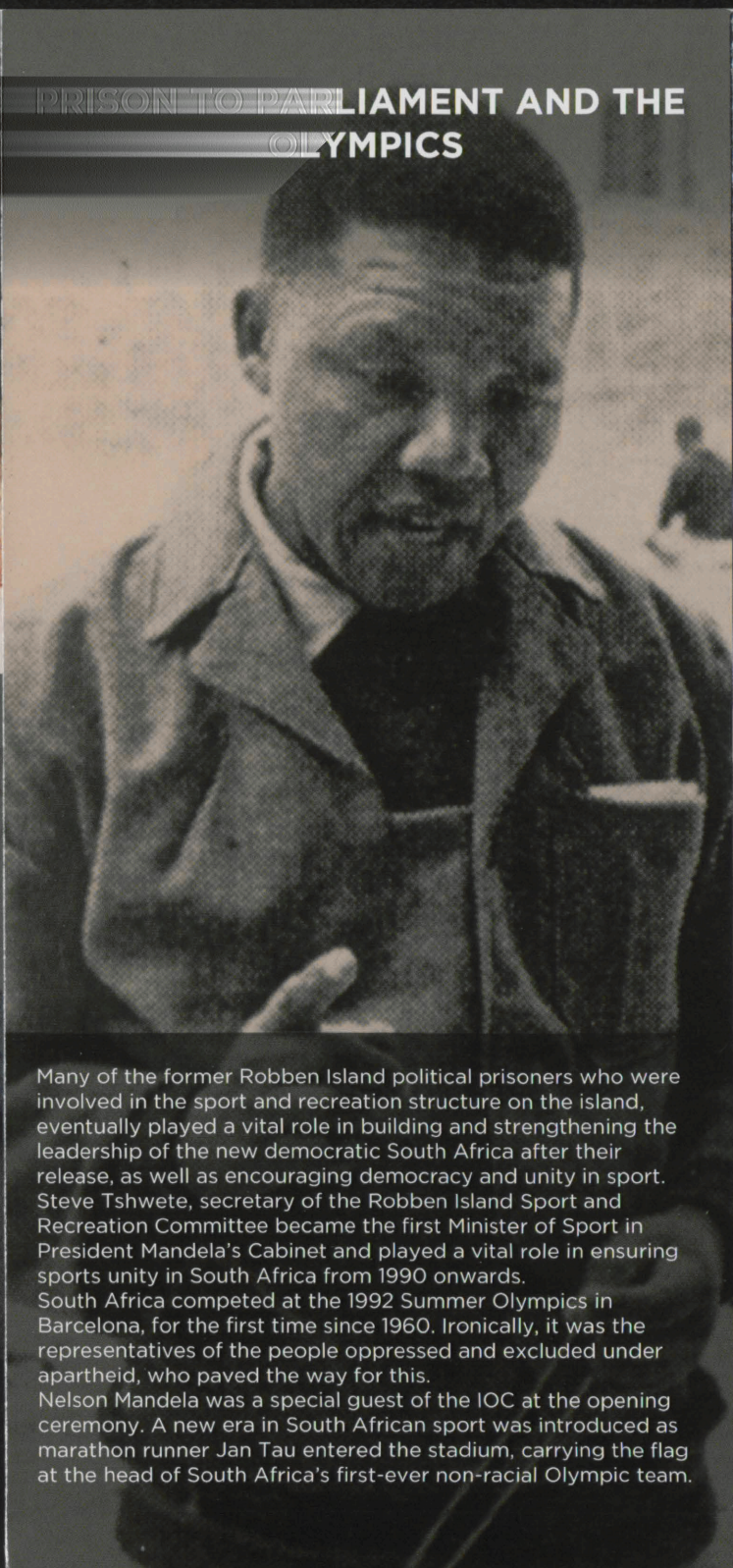
The highlight of the sporting calendar on Robben Island was the annual Summer Games, or mini-Olympics, held over two weekends during the festive season. One prisoner recalled, 'It was an event enjoyed by all the inmates at a time when they wished to be home with their family and friends'. A parade of participating teams officially opened the Summer Games. Inmates made cardboard cameras and videos and 'recorded' the action. The Games culminated in a prize-giving function and the awarding of diplomas and trophies made by artistic-minded people in the prison workshops. Another prisoner said, 'After our Summer Games I am sure we [could] show the Olympic guys a thing or two about being creative and organised'. The Games were based on the model of the Olympics, with outdoor and indoor sports.



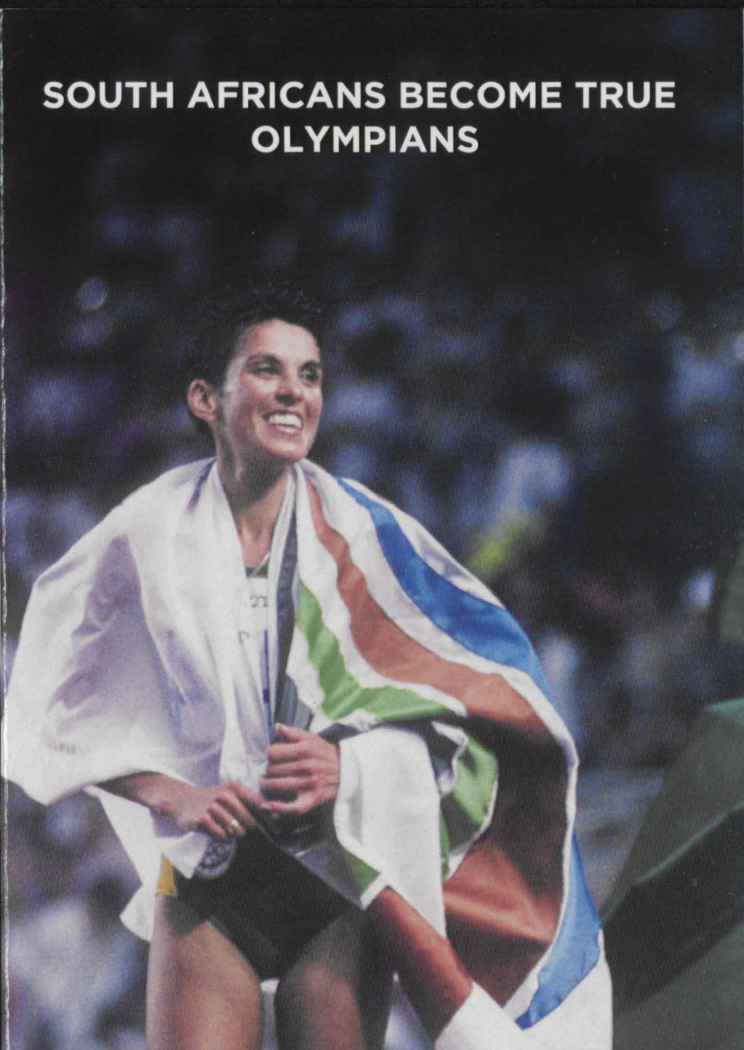
The Summer Games on eSiqithini, as the island was also known, embodied the values of fair play and teamwork. They were a living testament to the spirited nature of the freedom struggle and its recognition of the inclusive concept of sport and recreation. Recreation 'became a tool of physical, spiritual and mental therapy' in an ongoing struggle. Steve Tshwete maintained: 'they (the prison authorities) were resisting recreation; they would have preferred to keep us in our cells even on weekends when we weren't at work. They tried to do that, but we fought against it, as we believed that we were entitled to recreation'. Marcus Solomon said: '... we play because we want to create friends and it's not to win, it's to create a new human relationship, a new social order and sport must in that way contribute to that'. Based on the evidence of boxes of records now kept at the UWC/RIM Mayibuye Archives one can conclude that Robben Island Maximum Security Prison became a 'School of Administration and Management' for future leaders of South Africa. Unknown to the rest of the country and the world, sport united the prisoners and developed the values of respect, integrity, dignity, team-work and fair play among them. The carefully tended leisure activities helped turn a 'hell-hole' into a place of solidarity and self-belief.



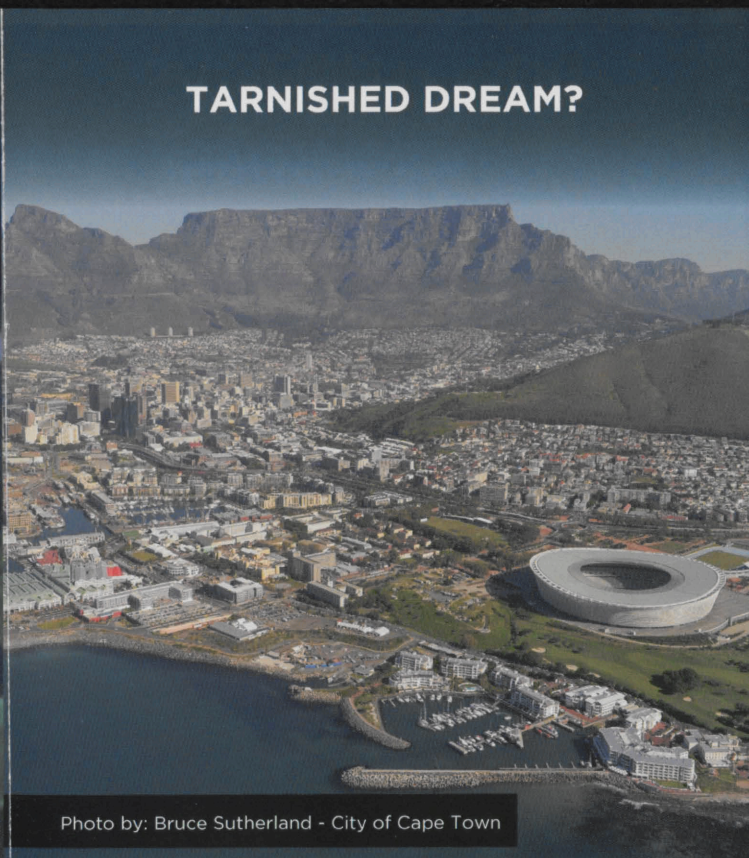
The onset of the 1990s brought dramatic change to hundreds of millions of people throughout the world, including South Africans. In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended. In South Africa the regime realised it was impossible to preserve apartheid without the total collapse of the country. As a result of the combined strategies to overthrow apartheid, Nelson Mandela and his comrades were finally released. The first democratic election in the country's history was held on 27 April 1994 and Mandela went from prisoner to president. He became a world icon of peace, alongside Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Developments in sport paralleled what was happening in society. A new National Sports Congress (NSC), later the National Olympic and Sports Congress (NOSC), was formed in 1989 by individuals aligned to the ANC and its internal allies in the Mass Democratic Movement. It brought rebel sports tours to an end by organising mass demonstrations and then set out to unify South African sport. A split developed between the NSC and SACOS, which went into decline and lost its leading role. Closer to organisations such as the New Unity Movement, APDUSA and the PAC, SACOS chose to maintain its policy of non-collaboration. As part of the new unity process, the various Olympic-related organisations came together and formed the Interim National Olympic Committee of South Africa (INOCSA). A hastily chosen team from South Africa was readmitted to the Olympic Games at Barcelona, Spain in 1992 at the instigation of Nelson Mandela and the ANC. INOCSA transformed itself to NOCSA, the National Olympic Committee of South Africa, paving the way for democratic South Africa to participate in the Olympics in a proper way for the first time in 1996. In 2004 representatives from all sporting codes formed the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) as the controlling body for all high performance sport in South Africa.



Many of the former Robben Island political prisoners who were involved in the sport and recreation structure on the island, eventually played a vital role in building and strengthening the leadership of the new democratic South Africa after their release, as well as encouraging democracy and unity in sport. Steve Tshwete, secretary of the Robben Island Sport and Recreation Committee became the first Minister of Sport in President Mandela's Cabinet and played a vital role in ensuring sports unity in South Africa from 1990 onwards. South Africa competed at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, for the first time since 1960. Ironically, it was the representatives of the people oppressed and excluded under apartheid, who paved the way for this. Nelson Mandela was a special guest of the IOC at the opening ceremony. A new era in South African sport was introduced as marathon runner Jan Tau entered the stadium, carrying the flag at the head of South Africa's first-ever non-racial Olympic team.



The memorable picture of silver medalist Elana Meyer and her Ethiopian sister, Derartu Tulu, celebrating arm-in-arm after their second and first places in the 10 000 meters race in Barcelona, symbolised the new vision for South Africa's future. The country had 93 athletes in its new-look team - 68 men and 25 women. They took part in 87 events in 19 sports. South Africa's tennis doubles pair also won the silver medal. By the next Olympics in Atlanta in the USA in 1996, South Africa had made the transition from white minority rule and apartheid to non-racial democracy, and it was about to adopt one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. Olympian gold medalists like Josia Thugwane and Penny Heyns became household names. Democracy also brought new ideas about women's participation and encouraged participation in sport among previously disadvantaged black South Africans. However, historical inequalities regarding facilities and opportunities remain entrenched today.

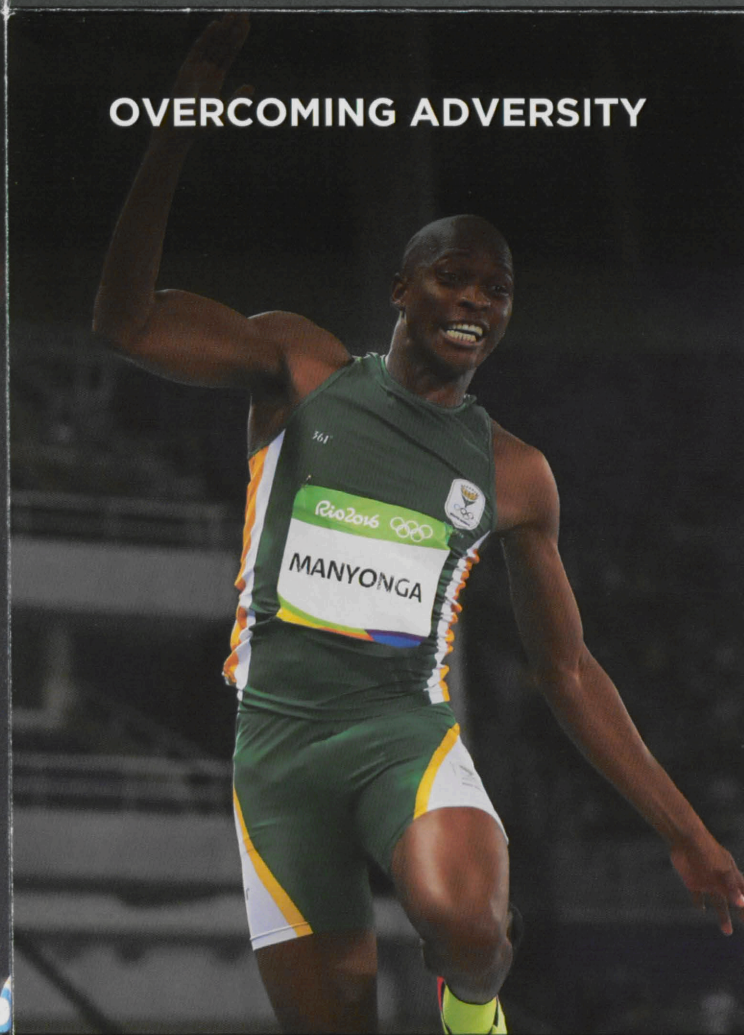


From the 1960s onwards, as television and sports sponsorship became popular in the age of economic globalisation, the Olympics changed its ethos. Amateur sport was replaced by professional athletes and full-scale commercialisation. The Games became billion-dollar events, often accompanied by controversies involving boycotts, doping, corruption and international politics. The Olympics may have lost its innocence. Yet, the success at Rio shows that the Olympic spirit still prevails and the power of the dream remains real.

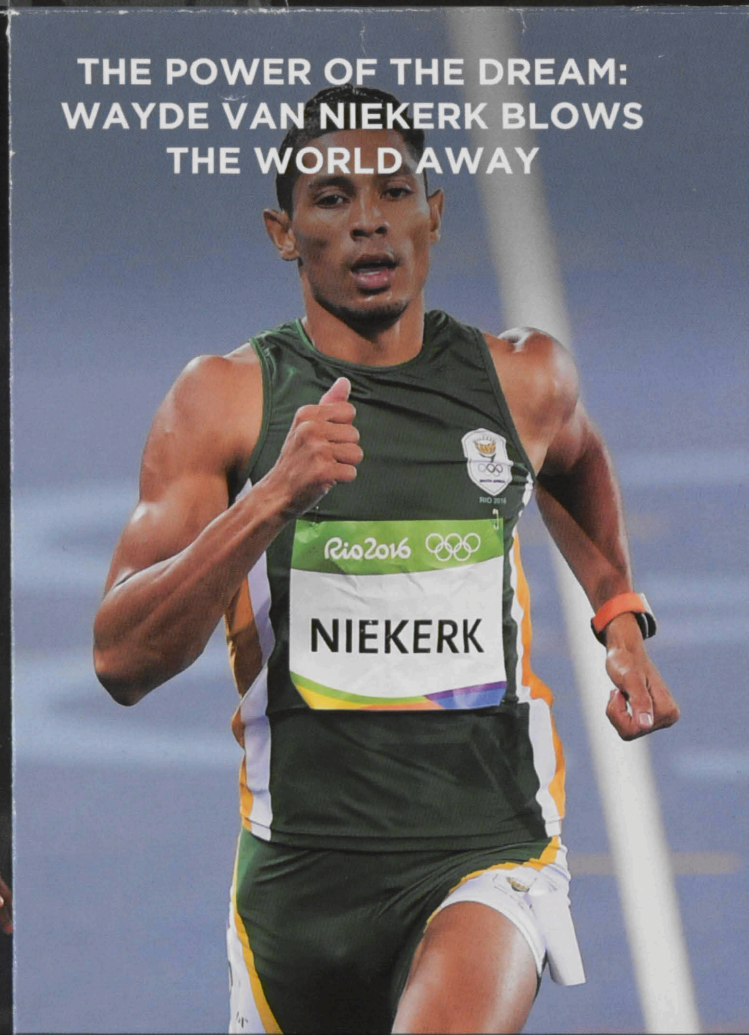
It is important to prioritise the future of children in South Africa. Through sport and other programmes they can remain optimistic, despite the challenges they face and discover their own creativity and potential.



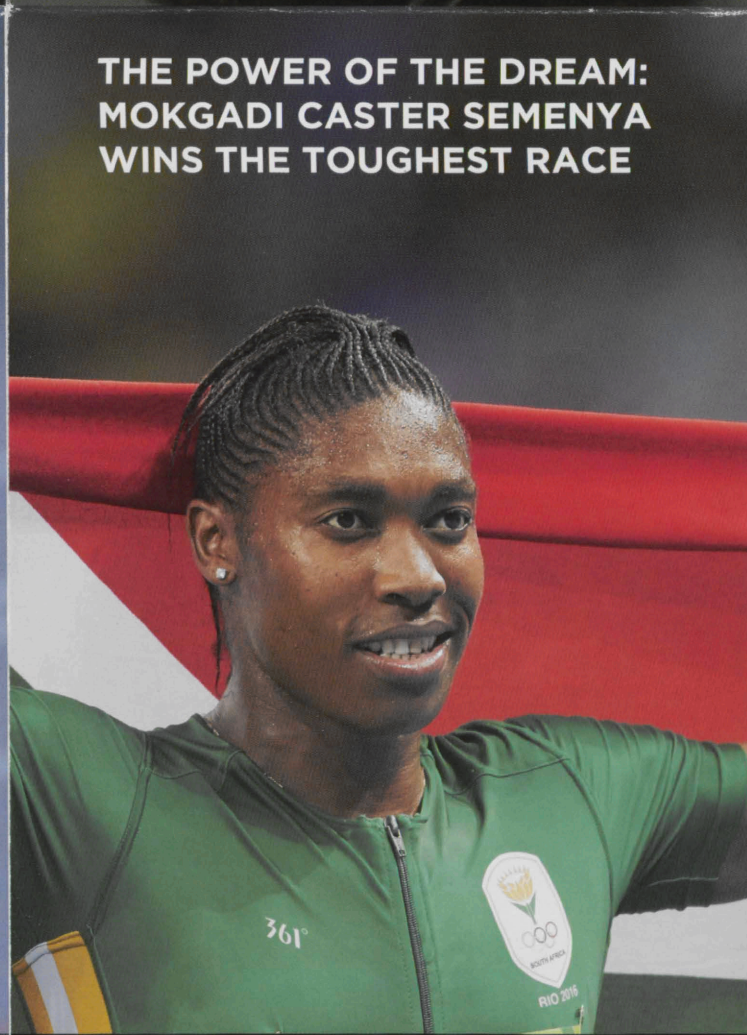
Since democracy South Africa has also become part of the Paralympic Games which caters for athletes with a range of physical disabilities, as well as visual and intellectual impairments. The Paralympics are held almost immediately following every Olympics and have their own International Paralympic Committee (IPC). The country made its Paralympic debut in 1964 in Tokyo, Japan, with nine athletes competing in archery, athletics, swimming and weightlifting. Since then South Africa has won no less than 280 medals of which 110 were gold. Margaret Harriman won 17 medals for bowls, but the most successful athlete has been Ernst van Dyk, who has won 10 Boston marathons and participated in seven consecutive Paralympics since 1992. Zanele Situ won gold in the Javelin in Sydney in 2000. Another legend is Natalie du Toit, who lost her leg, but nevertheless qualified for both the Olympics and Paralympics at Beijing in 2008. She is the only athlete to have carried her country's flag at the opening ceremony in both events.



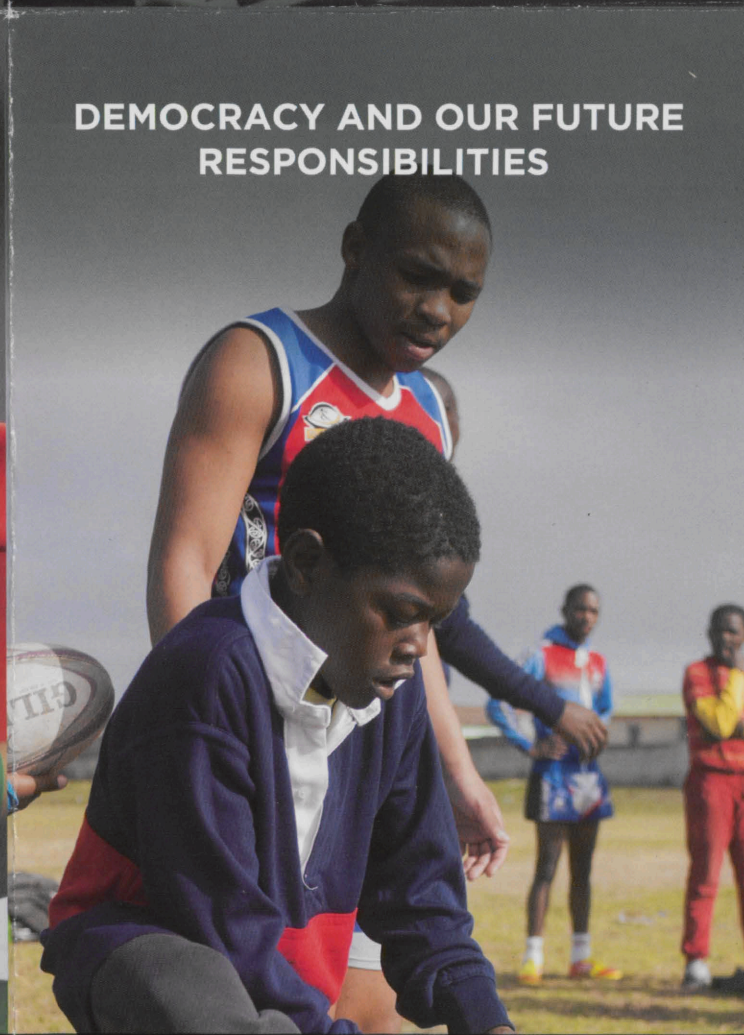
The 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio were South Africa's best Olympic Games to date. The team won 10 medals, the best achievement since Antwerp in 1920 and Helsinki in 1952. World class performances and the challenges faced by individual members of a non-racial, diverse team united the country as never before. Like the political prisoners on Robben Island, many of South Africa's 2016 Olympians had to overcome huge obstacles to participate in the Games. Luvo Manyonga from Mbekweni, near Paarl, recovered from drug addiction to win the silver medal in the long-jump. Fellow long-jumper Rushwaal Samaai was raised by his single mom and three siblings in a backyard shack. Lawrence Brittain overcame cancer to take the silver in rowing with his partner. These athletes demonstrate how the human spirit can overcome even the most severe obstacles and disabilities in life by embracing the power of the dream.



Wayde van Niekirk caused a sensation in Rio. He won gold in the 400 meters against a strong field and improved a long-standing world record. Van Niekirk's story is one of ordinary people doing extraordinary things - and overcoming big challenges to fulfil their dreams. His mother was a top SACOS sprinter but could not compete officially because of apartheid. Van Niekirk was born prematurely at only 29 weeks and his mother feared that he would not be able to live a normal life. His family also had to move to another town for him to realise his talent. He dedicated his win at Rio to all South Africans. His relationship with his 74 year-old coach 'Tannie Ans' Botha shows that all South Africans can work together with respect and humility, overcoming age and colour barriers.



The whole of South Africa sat up until after midnight waiting for the 800 metre final at Rio. Caster Semenya was running. Would she follow van Niekirk and bring home gold for South Africa? Semenya's race to get to Rio has been a very tough one. The hardships of a poor rural upbringing in Limpopo did not stop her from excellence in athletics but after her initial success hurtful public debates and ridicule about her gender identity and sexual orientation ensued. South Africa sat up until after midnight waiting for the women's 800 metre final at Rio. As the starting pistol went off, Semenya was under more pressure than most athletes have ever experienced. However, she persevered and brought home the gold and established a new national record. All the setbacks and hate speech did not stop her from holding on to her dream. Today South Africa has united behind her and regards her as a national hero. She has overcome attempts to break her spirit and beat the best.



Caster Semenya's story underlines the fact that South Africa is a country whose constitution protects people regardless of race, colour, class, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Semenya's story also shows how far South Africa has come from the dark days of colonialism and apartheid when black South Africans and women were discriminated against and could not be full citizens. Today all South Africans have equal rights and can aspire to go to the Olympics or play their role in different ways. The country has come a long way since the dawn of democracy. However, the playing field is not yet level. The majority of South Africans are still burdened by poverty, unemployment and a range of other social challenges. South Africa's next phase of struggle is to create socio-economic dignity for all its citizens. Sport can play an important part through the development of young people and the provision of facilities in communities.



The South African Olympic and Paralympic teams who went to Rio are role models who encourage everyone to overcome adversity; improve as individuals and contribute to South Africa becoming become a better country. Our Olympic and Paralympic stars went from being premature babies, drug addicts, backyard dwellers and cancer survivors to champions. Every one of them got to Rio by daring to dream, working hard and using the opportunities that came their way. The resolution to the challenges that we face as individuals and as a country, lies within each of us.

We all have the power to make a difference, for ourselves and society. Sport and the reinforcement of Olympic values can help. These are to use sport for encouraging the harmonious development of humankind, promoting peace and human dignity through Excellence, Respect, Fair play, Friendship, Joy of Effort and Balance between body, will and mind.

Keep believing in The Power of the Dream.

For more info please contact: ICESDD, mkeim@uwc.ac.za or Ph: 021 959 3859



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