



*When I hit out at my wife or I beat up my kids, I'm hitting out at God because my children, my wife, the next man is all created in the image of God.*  
**Barry Isaacs**

*I try and honour the traditions and also point out the detriment that traditions can have on certain aspects of our humanity.*  
**Fagrie Nasiep**



*In the Bible, I read that women don't have a different spirit to men – we all have the same spirit. So we are equal because of the same Spirit that we carry.*  
**Patrick Pickering**

*...its about bringing this cosmopolitan man and this indigenous man together, and let them play with each other because both those two men are living inside us.*  
**Earl Djehuti Ehrlich Erasmus**



*Whatever I've been given, the opportunities I've received, I have a responsibility to share it with those coming in behind me.*  
**Quentin Rapitse**

*New Birth was a vehicle during the apartheid system for a lot of hopeless young people on the Cape Flats..*  
**John Bean**



## Get Involved!

The MAD exhibition was launched on Freedom Day, 27 April 2021 at the Iziko Slave Lodge. Schools and communities are encouraged to visit the exhibition and/or to invite SAFFI to explore ways in which they can participate in the MAD initiative.

The exhibition serves as a catalyst to acknowledge the humanity of African men and to contribute toward existing indigenous knowledge about what it means to be human in oppressive and dehumanising contexts. This can be expressed through various forms of art, music and dance. The MAD initiative is about cultivating *Ubuntu* in intimate relationships and in every sphere of life.



The MAD exhibition includes sign language interpretation



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## Vision

To see women, men and children live their full potential in a society free from gender-based violence, where faith and justice are honoured

### The Quest for Human Dignity in the Face of Oppression

The African continent, and South Africa in particular, is reeling from centuries of oppression in the forms of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. Rooted in white supremacy and patriarchy, these systems normalised a belief that God created black people and women to be subordinate to white people and men – and institutionalised the denial of black people's humanity and agency. These beliefs continue to erode the soul of oppressor and oppressed alike. Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most tragic outcomes in South Africa. However, while the GBV pandemic continues to dominate national and international discourses, little is told about African men who do not oppress women in intimate relationships and family life.

What does it take for an African man to live his humanity in a way that affirms life and respects the dignity of others, especially women? In the stories of the 14 'coloured' African men from \*the Cape Flats who participated in the *Men Affirming Dignity (MAD)* exhibition, traces of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* offers some insight into the nature of their humanity. *Ubuntu* states that a human being is only human through other human beings. "*Ubuntu is the very essence of being human. It means that my humanity is inextricably bound up in your humanity.*" (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

The men in the exhibition upend the dominant profiling of black men as essentially violent and immoral – hence the acronym *MAD*. They do not see themselves as "heroes", "good" or "real" men – they live ordinary lives whilst navigating histories of oppression and often radical dehumanisation.

### Origins of the MAD Initiative

The *Men Affirming Dignity* exhibition is produced by the *South African Faith & Family Institute (SAFFI)*. SAFFI is a multi-faith non-profit organisation that was established in 2008 to engage the faith dimensions of the roots of GBV through strengthening the capacity of religious leaders and faith communities, as well as engaging men as key resources in this work.

The *MAD* initiative was inspired by SAFFI Founder – Elizabeth Hoorn Petersen's – desire to acknowledge and amplify the humanity of African men like her father, Daniel Hoorn. Growing up, she witnessed that Daniel never used abuse, shaming or violence at home with her mother and eight siblings. These qualities not only affirmed the dignity of his family but enriched the lives of countless people in the community. Elizabeth believed that contrary to popularised portrayals of black men as violent, much was *not* being said about non-violent black men. Daniel's ways of being human served as the catalyst for *MAD*.

### Reclaiming Memories, Amplifying History

**Iziko Museums of South Africa** in partnership with SAFFI, is committed to reclaiming the memory and histories of the many lives that were forever changed by the slave trade as conveyed in the museum's overarching theme: 'From human wrongs to human rights'.

**MAD Patron, Dr Ruben R. Richards**



*"The significance (of housing the exhibition in the Slave Lodge) becomes pronounced when one realises that the San and Khoi, considered the first people/nation of South Africa were, together with their descendants, classified by the colonial and apartheid system as 'coloured' people. The men in this exhibition are descendants of people who were enslaved, including the indigenous Khoi/San. They have survived the relentless abuse of 'coloured' identity by systems such as colonialism and apartheid and social engineering designed to ensure that 'coloured' males do not progress beyond a certain level of civilization in South Africa".*

**SAFFI Founder & Executive Director, Elizabeth Hoorn Petersen**



*"The MAD initiative does not romanticise black men, but serves as a catalyst to amplify the humanity not only of 'coloured' African men on the Cape Flats but black men in South Africa, on the African continent and in the diaspora. Our quest is to heal relations between women and men; whilst asserting the often-muted life-affirming narratives and social histories of African people."*

\* **The Cape Flats** - also known as 'coloured' townships were created through the racialised legislative processes of the Group Areas Act (1950) during the apartheid era. These townships and the processes of racial classification and forced relocation... imbued the racial category 'coloured' with unique political, physical, spatial and socio-economic meaning. (Elaine Salo, 2005)

## In Their Own Words



*I still work with the lessons that I have learned from my parents. When I left home at the age of 18, my mother told me to take care of myself, to be cautious of my friends, and to respect people.*  
**Daniel Hoorn**

*Coloured people were shoved into one space and then the survival of the fittest was the rule of the day. In Belhar extension 13... going to the shop came with a parental warning to be on the lookout for shootings.*  
**Shawn George**



*...it is the air of this country, the pain that South Africa has felt for hundreds of years. We need to allow this generation to do what they have to do. South Africa has a story to tell – they are the best people to tell it through music, arts, dance.*  
**Hagin Kortjie** (State of Mind – gospel rap duo)

*The fathers today are those young people who were beaten up during apartheid ... and violence breeds violence. We shouldn't turn to guns to kill each other – those were the weapons that the police used during apartheid to kill us.*  
**Uncle Willy**

