

Keith Kirsten Speech

CEO – Sello Hatang, members of the NMF team, members of the board, donors and friends of the foundation, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Leah Tutu, Mandela family , Honourable David Makhura, Tanya Visser (SANA), Vivian Black (Goldreef & Rose Society of South Africa), Prue Johnson (Johannesburg Garden Club), distinguished guests, members of the media, it is my pleasure to give you a little history of my involvement and the story of the Nelson Mandela Rose.

I met Nelson Mandela when he was released from prison in the early 90's (11th of February) when I planted trees with him deep in the Alexandra township with Food and Trees for Africa of which I am a cofounder and patron along with South African Nursery Association , Department of Environmental Affairs and the Jewish National Fund. It was a Saturday afternoon and arbour day on that day. The speeches took place in the playing field of the Alexandra playing centre.

Interestingly enough I have a photo with me, of Madiba and myself, 1992 Miss South Africa Amy Kleinhans and a very young Bongani Bingwa still a friend and anchor presenter on Carte Blanche & 702. He has this photograph in his study and he can't tell me how many people he has to explain in the picture that I am NOT FW De Klerk. Whilst actually planting the trees the Wits peace corp. who did a remarkable job of keeping peace in the township mentioned to Nelson Mandela and myself that it was now 5:30 in the afternoon in early spring and that he being Nelson Mandela and me looking too much like FW De Klerk was time to get out of the township.

My relationship with Madiba continued, seeing him at various events including birthdays and him showing me his cell at Robben Island a few years later during a fundraiser when I had the good fortune to be invited by a well known

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bank. Then I was also asked by Amina Cachalia to assist and plant Madiba's first garden at his home in 13th Avenue Houghton a request to which I obliged with pleasure. I refused payment and Madiba asked to pay into my favourite charity such was the calibre of the man. Soon after this I had the opportunity to interview Madiba and discuss various issues on my TV show including the environment and his love of nature.

In the year 2000, I sat next to Achmat Dangor on a flight to New York, on the 2nd of February 2000 almost 18 years to the day and we got talking about how I would truly love to name a rose after Nelson Mandela. As he was the CEO of the Children's Fund at the time, it was at that time to be released for the Children's Fund. He signed a little agreement on the aircraft for me to proceed, I have it with me. I travelled the world in search of the rose and unfortunately for various reasons including some legal ramifications some might remember at the time, mainly to do with the ownership of the Madiba brand this project was put on hold (If George Bizos is here he might remember it well).

In 2014 the foundation approached me to discuss once again the naming of the rose and I was delighted. Further search continued around the world including Europe and South Africa for a rose and the team involved in choosing the one we have today was made up of Heather Henriques of the NMF, Ma Graca Machel , Zelda La Grange, Myself and Rose Ncube from my office. This we also did with the help of the growers Ludwig and Halmar Taschner who have grown the first roses that will be released in the months ahead on an ongoing basis with five other rose growers around the country also producing under license. We have already made arrangements for the rose to in time be released worldwide by growers internationally.

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The proceeds from the sale of this rose will be for the benefit of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Keith Kirsten Horticulture International being purely the donor and facilitator of the project. So nursery industry and media we would like lots of free and pro bono advertising from you please.

THE ROSE

This rose with its orange vermillion colour is a handsome and tall grower from a metre and up under good conditions. It's a big bush, a novelty and floriferous, and is known as a floribunda giving many clusters of beautiful blooms. It is suitable for any sunny position in the garden or container and we urge cities, co-operates, government departments, and the individual public to plant these roses even on mass and be the legacy by planting a Nelson Mandela rose in your own gardens.

You might wonder about the orange vermillion colour. Our brief amongst the selectors was not another red or yellow rose even though the yellow was a close contender.

We are delighted that this rose was chosen to be part of the centenary program and it was in this month 28years ago that Madiba was released from prison. I am honoured and humbled to be a part of it.

Thank you!!!