

Goodbye robes, hello boots! Thuli Madonsela starts her 300km walk for hope and students

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Thuli Madonsela in the mountains.
Trek4Mandela

- Thuli Madonsela is walking for a cause again – this time it's for academic inclusion and to clear student debt.
- In a life where she has many commitments and a very demanding schedule, Madonsela often finds solace in walking.
- She summited Africa's highest mountain peak, Kilimanjaro, twice.

On Saturday, former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela swaps her legal and academic attire for hiking boots again as she launches her Pilgrimage of Hope in Stellenbosch.

Madonsela, nowadays known as Prof Thuli Madonsela, the current Director of the Centre for Social Justice at Stellenbosch University, is no stranger to physical challenges out of her comfort zone. She summited Mount Kilimanjaro twice, in 2019 and 2022, for the [Trek4Mandela](#) initiative that celebrates Nelson Mandela's legacy and creates awareness for important causes, such as the Caring4Girls programme which aims to give a voice to young girls, instil dignity and foster confidence.

With this hike, Madonsela has fewer heights to scale than distance to cover.

The [Pilgrimage of Hope](#) is a popular but challenging route of more than 300km, from Stellenbosch to the southernmost tip of Africa at Cape Agulhas.

She will once again be walking for a cause: [#Action4Inclusion](#) is a Stellenbosch University initiative aimed at ensuring academic inclusion and clearing historical debt for all deserving students. It often happens that students don't receive sufficient funding for their studies. Without the required funds, they can't register for the next academic year due to outstanding fees, and risk being deregistered. The target for this crowdfunding initiative is R3 million.

"The #Action4Inclusion Pilgrimage of Hope is about human solidarity and about realising – one step at a time – the constitutional dream of a society that constantly heals the divisions of the past, and any new divisions for that matter," says Madonsela. "We need to create a society where each person's potential is freed and everyone's life is improved."

In a life where she had many commitments and a very demanding schedule, Madonsela often finds solace in walking. Apart from the lifestyle benefits from walking, it gives her time to think and reflect. She is particularly inspired by the words of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche: "All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking."

"Walking is good for our health. It's good for our mental health, and it even makes us smarter. But more importantly, we are agents of hope," she says.

She begins her Pilgrimage of Hope by walking from Stellenbosch to Franschoek this weekend, ticking off at least 35 km of the route. The event is open to the public and close to 40 people will join her on Saturday and Sunday.

In October, she will continue walking from Franschoek and finish the remaining 270km over 13 days. She will be joined during these stages by friends, colleagues, entrepreneurs, thought leaders and CEOs.

Amanda Takis, a close friend of Madonsela who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with her in 2021, will also walk this weekend and in October. "Thuli inspires everyone. She believes all people have the ability to do the impossible. When we climbed Kilimanjaro she was always in front. She led us with determination. Thuli doesn't believe in shortcuts," she says.



Jeanneret Momberg, Thuli Madonsela and Erns Grundling

Erns Grundling

In recent weeks, Madonsela has prepared for the Pilgrimage of Hope during morning walks with the co-ordinators, author and TV presenter Erns Grundling and Jeanneret Momberg, the CEO of Visit Stellenbosch.

"I am super excited about Prof Thuli walking the Pilgrimage of Hope," says Grundling. "It is a fantastic route through diverse communities. She will have a lasting impact on the people she meets along the way, and it's special that she invited the public to participate during the launch weekend."

Momberg feels privileged to be involved with the project that originated in Stellenbosch.

"Part of the excitement of this hike is having access to the great mind of Prof Thuli Madonsela," she says. "Her giving nature and the way she embodies 'ubuntu' is very inspiring. Her cause is also helping to give wonderful young minds the opportunity to contribute to our society as a whole."

* To donate to #Action4Inclusion, click [here](#).

* To find out more about the Pilgrimage of Hope, visit www.pilgrimageofhope.co.za.