

Pass on wisdom and knowledge and support local businesswomen

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Marketer and designer turned ethical artistic jeweller, Charmaine Taylor taught herself how to design jewellery and started up-cycling the original prison fence from Robben Island Prison that was salvaged in 2009. A percentage of the profits made by Taylor's company, Legacy Collection, gets donated to both the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Abalimi Bezekhaya, an initiative that teaches organic farming in the Cape Town townships.



Designer turned ethical artistic jeweller, Charmaine Taylor. Image supplied.

Taylor says she has always had a passion and vision to promote the message of forgiveness and peace that former President Nelson Mandela shared. Here she elaborates on the journey she undertook to make that vision come true.

■ ***Please tell us more about yourself and your business.***

I am a self-taught jewellery designer and always been brave to try new challenges and seem to re-invent myself every 7 years to do something bold and fresh. I have a marketing degree, had my own graphic design company for 7 years (worked for companies like Naartjie clothing) and then a self-taught jewellery designer and artist.

■ ***How did the idea for the business come about?***

I have always been a brave entrepreneur and always enjoyed evolving my creative journey wherever I could. I owned my own graphic design company called Love Design and I was losing my passion to do computer-based work and getting more involved in my immediate community to make a difference and to use my hands more to do art.

I got involved in conscious art, which aimed at raising funds and awareness for anti-rhino-poaching in 2012 and then starting chatting to my friends from RIACT who rescued the original prison fence from Robben Island. I then fell in love with the story of the almost buried but now rescued scrap metal. It is the original prison fence that once held my earthly icon and hero Nelson Mandela. I then got the sole creative rights to create jewellery from the original prison fence from Robben Island.

■ ***How difficult is it to be a female entrepreneur and how do you deal with the challenges?***

I have found it hard being a female entrepreneur working on my own, as when you go into big boardrooms it is mostly still to this day filled mostly with men, so the demographic is still large. But being a female in the jewellery industry gives me a

creative edge, as woman love jewellery a lot more than men. And what I do is totally unique and you can only get Robben Island Jewellery from my design house. So, I found strength in being a woman in my game.

■ **Who's your female role models/business mentors – women you respect and admire?**

My goodness, I have so many!

My biggest dream is to meet Michelle Obama. She is such a prolific voice for woman's education and human rights worldwide. And such a great public speaker.

Stella McCartney is my design role model with her ethical voice in the clothing industry; how clothing affects the environment and human rights.

I also love Naomi Campbell as a creative vision for her NPO Fashion for Relief which gives back to environmental and humanitarian causes.

And I have to also mention my dear personal friend Catherine Constantinides of South Africa; for all she does for human rights (especially the forgotten people in Western Sahara) speaking at the United Nations for those who have no voice, to also being an Obama Fellow and Desmond Tutu fellow. Catherine is also an environmental warrior in South Africa and abroad. She has encouraged me along my journey by cheering me all the way and I have done the same for her. I am so proud to call her my friend.



Some of the pieces designed by Taylor. Image supplied.

■ **This Women's Month, what is your word of encouragement to aspiring women in business?**

It's a GREAT time to be a woman in the world today. With the #TimesUp and *Black Panther* attention from the States to the rise of the African Woman in design and business, I am excited about the future of African woman.



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I encourage all female entrepreneurs who are succeeding with their businesses to pass on their wisdom and knowledge to other growing businesswomen and to support them in buying local. I find women in South Africa still support overseas business rather than local.

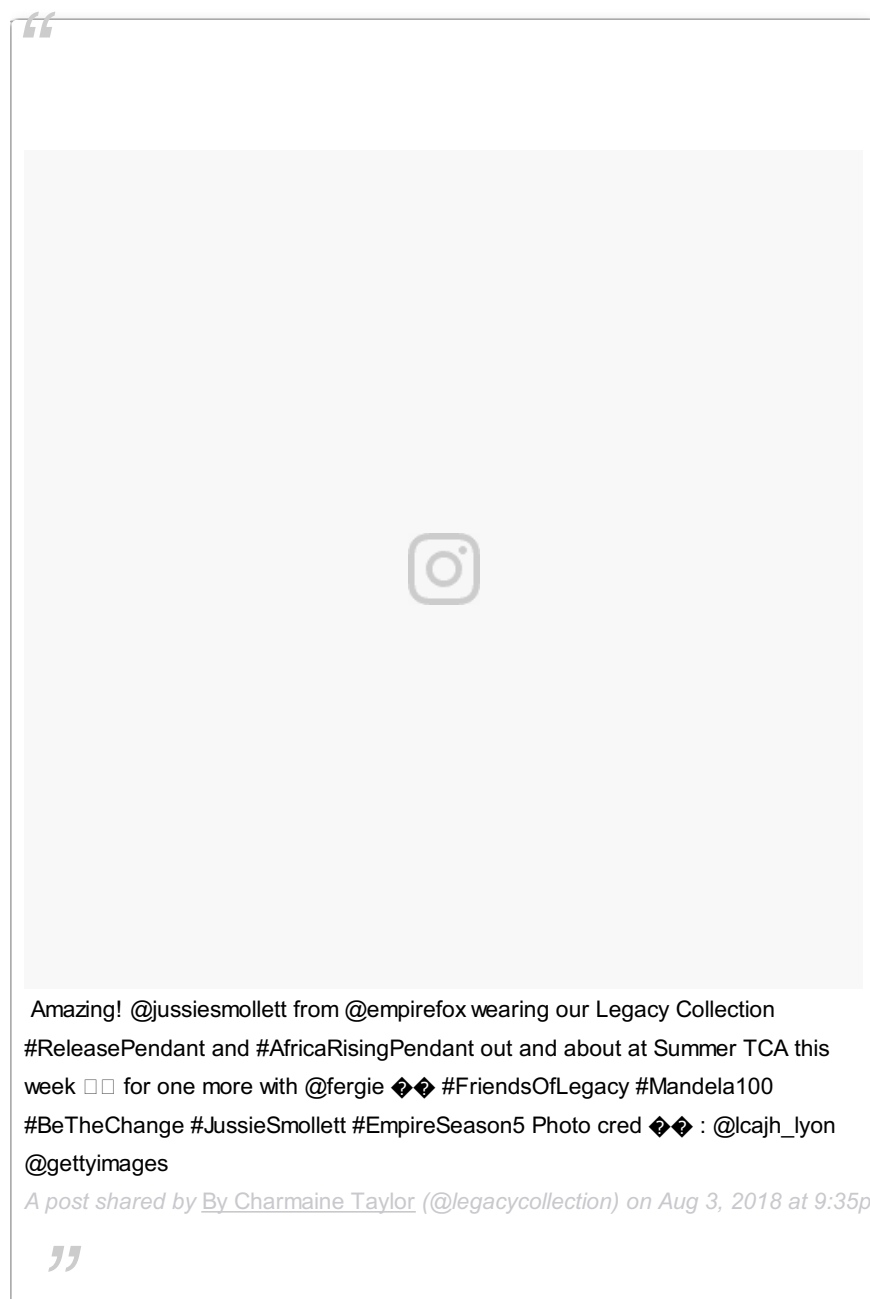
■ **What is next for you and your business?**

On 14 September I am going to Norway to the Nobel Peace Centre where I will be putting up an installation. It is Nelson Mandela's prison cell build to the exact size out of the original prison fence that once held him captive.

This is for Oslo Culture Night, which is Norway's biggest one-day cultural festival where the city's cultural institutions extend their opening hours into the night and host unique events. The installation will then be moved inside the Nobel Centre building until the end of September as an addition to the "Tell the world about us" exhibition.

I will then be heading to Sweden where I will be hosting a few events and showcasing my jewellery there.

Then later in September, my jewellery will be on the Season 5 premiere of *Empire* on Fox TV. So, watch out for my Africa Rising Pendant and my Release Pendant on the show.



Taylor has recently moved into a new studio in Gardens, Cape Town and invites anyone interested in her work to come visit and view her art and jewellery, by appointment only. Address: 35 Wesley Street, Canterbury Studios, Unit 10, Gardens, Cape Town. You can also Legacy Collection on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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