

Winds of change ...as Public Works' Southern Region celebrates Heritage Day in style *Vusi Shabalala reports*

It was a cool Friday afternoon but slight breezy atmosphere as the KZN Public Works' Southern Region celebrated the Heritage month...in style.



Programme Director Mr Simphiwe Gina beating the piano at random during Southern Region Heritage Day event

September marks the annual Heritage month celebrations in South Africa and the 24th of September being declared as national Heritage Day. However, the Southern Region management and personnel felt it also befitting to mark this historic day significantly by identifying the 21st of September 2012 as a day of celebrating our rich and colourful South African History in a multicultural throng of personnel and guests.



Above here is Mrs Cebile Buthelezi as she delivered a welcoming and purpose briefing

As you entered the Southern Region event venue, one would tell by the creativity of the colourful tables that were full of various meals prepared for all cultures, one would tell that it was like a *"delicatessen"*.

The programme was scheduled for 13:00 and due to time management embedded in that entire office, the Southern Regional management and staff were indeed on time. Messrs Simphiwe Gina and Ramnarain were Programme Directors of the day. The singing of the National Anthem was the first order of the day in the opening of the occasion as led by Mr Gina with his metallic voice. He is not a staunch singer but he would have reminded you of *"Lou Rawls"*..for those who know and remember how Lou Rawls sings the blues.



Ms Alta Koekemoer and Ms Innete Duncan on the dance floor for a *"Sokkie Dance"*.

After the singing of the National Anthem the hit was just on the nail as the programme kicked-off. As we cruise through this journey, Mrs C Buthelezi proffered welcoming words inclusive of the real purpose of the event and why it being celebrated at the Southern Regional Office. Let me remind you that as speakers took to the podium, there were no instructions as to how one had to deliver his or her speech. As

speeches were delivered, one would also sense and feel that the day in question - Heritage Day – was recognizing some aspects of South African culture which were both tangible and difficult to analyse. Furthermore, the speakers were full of that zeal and zest, that vim and verve from their creative expressions and poems. It was all about our historical inheritance, language, food we eat as well as the land we live in.

Mr Brandon Harper was the first to be on board in responding to the programme as he elucidated quite very brief on the significance of Heritage Day and what it meant to him.



Mr Brandon Harper above also had a fair share of time to make a mark in his delivery note.

The programme was also well set and planned in terms of speakers and traditional items. One must also acknowledge that the day was filled and graced by bevy of beauties in their artful bead wear and head gear with men also geared in those colourful cultural and customary attire and costumes from head to toe notwithstanding to note that there were those men who had their cultural shields and assegai- that would remind you of *“Umlandu kaZulu”* literally meaning *“the Zulu history”*.

Ms Innette Duncan and Ms Alta Koekemoer broke the ice as they came first on the dance floor with the *“Sokkie Dance”*. As a piece of *“Afrikaans musik”* was played, both partners took to the stage, at that moment, I

was reminded of David Kramer, one of the famous South African white favourite musicians of the 80s and 90s also a celebrity by then white communities. It was a dance that took almost three to four minutes which had all guests to proffer a buzzing ovation. It was Heritage Day...in style.

After the dance the two ladies, we cruised further as Mrs Gladys Zondi also took to the podium. She provided a profound speech in isiZulu which had all that it takes to understand the Zulu culture from all sides of the dice. Her speech covered even issues related to customary adherence by men and women from the early stages of life, to delinquent stage, teenage stage, middle or upper one and the adulthood stages. It all encompass the cycle of a Zulu maiden to a mother and a Zulu boy to a warrior. I remember she mentioned *“ntombi-nto”* literally meaning *“virgin”*. After her speech she then took to the dance floor with her group where one enjoyed the vibe of energetic women from Southern Region doing their own thing... in style. This was a day full of fun, joy and gaiety. I wish you were there.



Above is Mrs Gladys Zondi delivered a very vibrant but touching speech on cultural norms and morals.

As the Heritage Day ship cruised, the programme was then fulfilled by Mr H Ramaddhin and Mrs P Singh who delivered an Indian concept with a range of cultural issues that attest to the Indian world. It ranged from food, clothing, artefacts, prayer

symbols, religion, health and morals. What also caught the eyes of guests was that the two speakers ended becoming competitors during a best dressed individual in Indian style. I remind you once more that this event was indeed a well class event of its kind. After the speech we were entertained by a group of four Indians dancers led by a very young, beautiful and vibrant girl by the name of Shenae Dewduth. The girl was indeed twinkle-little star as coordinated so fluently with the tune of the music. The way the group moved, twisted and danced you would have felt the body steam of Bollywood, as they swayed to the rhythm and sound of the tantalising music that was played. I must assure the girl was awesome. Remember, it is Southern Region as they celebrate Heritage Day...in style.



Above here is Mr Ramnarain who also served as Programme Director

In spite of the momentum of the dance by the previous groups, the Programme Directors also kept their cool and momentum by sticking to the structure of the day's programme.



Ms Thandeka Zondi who played a very pivotal role with her committee members in ensuring the event ended being a success.

We further continued our journey as our minds focussed on the guest speaker of the day, Dr RT Govender, Senior Manager from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture (*not related to the KZN Public Works' HOD*) who delivered a mouth-watering and brain feeding speech. I must the gentleman was so eloquent that not even a buzzing fly would detract one's attention and concentration from what Dr Govender was saying.

In his opening remarks Dr Govender commended Public Works as a leading department in the Province that actually and really honours the celebration of Heritage month since its declaration by the Government of the day. This in essence reflects positive state of affairs for Public Works in that it respects and honours the cultural diversities taking into account the management and personnel who serve this department, the Province and its people with pride.



Above: A bevy of beauties supported by big "gurus" who magnified, electrified and enlightened the occasion as they danced with pride

"With a broader social and political context, the day's events are a powerful gent for promulgating a South African identity, fostering reconciliation and promoting the notion that variety is a national asset as opposed to igniting conflict" he confirmed. Furthermore, "heritage has defined as that which we inherit: the sum total of wild life and scenic parks, sites of scientific or historical importance, national monuments, historic buildings, works of art, literature

and music, oral traditions and museum collections together with their documents” attested Dr Govender.

According to Dr Govender he acceded to Government’s approach on the celebration of such commemorative days as he added that “...every year the South African Government chooses an appropriate theme to celebrate Heritage Day. This year the theme is: ***Celebrating our National Heroes, then and now***” he stressed.



Above: The guest speaker of the day, Dr R.T. Govender, Senior Manager from the KZN Department of Arts & Culture.

From his speech, it may be supported that as Public Works, we need to begin and continue to “celebrate our progressive constitution and no other country in the world is blessed with a constitution like ours” he bragged. In a nutshell we need to continue living “*Ubuntu*” and show the hospitality and warmth to fellow countrymen and visitors alike. In closure he complemented that this event is mostly about togetherness and teamwork, attributes that have helped to build the rainbow nation and that will keep the rainbow intact for years to come. It is of positive thinking for the Southern Regional Manager, Mr Mchunu to invite people of Dr Govender’s calibre who like many pillar big-wigs cement a strong bond amongst management and personnel in the public sector. Therefore, events like these are crucial platform for such purpose. As the programme reached it midway, a lot of dancing by various groups took the stage with enthusiasm and eagerness. Hereafter,

Mrs Violet Mashika took charge of the podium to reflect on the Sotho tradition and culture. Mrs Violet Mashika elucidated with that high strong sense of elation that “we need to learn to understand one another and enjoy one’s cultures from a face value perspective” she acclaimed. After her speech, likewise she was joined by her group which received a standing ovation as they nearly mesmerised the gathering with the thunderous Xhosa art dance and their isiXhosa songs as cherry-on-top for the groove. Be reminded, the event was a cracker...a real cracker. There was no group or speaker who after giving a piece of cake to the guests had to take their respective sitting space without an applause or ovation. The atmosphere had its own “*heritage*” vibe.



Above is Mrs Violet Mashika when she delivered her SeSotho concept and below is an Indian dance group led by a very emerging energetic and intelligent Shenae Dewduth. A girl to be proud of indeed !!



It would be equally appreciated to commend and take hats off for the organiser of the event who did a sterling job in the preparation of this outstanding occasion,

including the Southern Region management led by Mr Thobuyise Mchunu.



Above here are ladies on the dance floor



Above: A cultural dance that proved men can also do good

The last concept and dance for the before formal closure came from Ms Ncedisa Cekiso who showered the throng with the gift of isiXhosa culture and tradition. She stamped her authority as she delivered her part like the others. If one would notice with acceptance one would realise that the speakers were mostly of female dominance. This does not in any manner indicate the disregard of men in support of the event, it must be stressed that Southern Region men were in full swing. However, Ms Cekiso closed her part likewise with a dance group that also shook the district venue. No dance group was better or best to the other as the music, lyrics and rhythm is different and fits only the respective culture- hence "heritage" day.



Ms Ncedisa Cekiso on the podium giving a Xhosa tradition concept.

The last moment of the programme came at the appropriate time when the Southern Region Manager, Mr Thobuyise Mchunu was afforded podium and the audacity to rap the event. During his address, Mr Mchunu highlighted very special issues that would touch an individual when related to cultural diversity and understanding the heritage of South Africa. Amongst other issues raised were that people should begin to know the importance of the colours of the national flag. Added to this notion was the reason of celebrating using the national flag. As he was fine tuning the talk he even balanced his speech with some jokes so as to get all guests' understanding of his closing remarks. He thanked all prominent guests who managed to respond to his invite, extended his appreciation and compliments to the Southern Region Organising Committee that all arrangements for the event a success. Before meals were about to be dished, the Regional Manager also had an audacity to run the last item of the programme being the *"Best Dressed"* personnel, both males and females who were at the event. This was not just a competition to outclass other people but a mere sincere competition of fulfilling the agility in staff to continue supporting "Heritage Day" celebrations across. In addition, to inculcate a sense of pride with your individual culture, its artefacts, traditional gear wear, its wear style and countenance. It was most encouraging to realise that not a single culture was isolated

during this slot. There were winners at the end who walked away with prizes. This is just the beginning, things might be different next year as Mr Mchunu announced of his own initiative opinion that would seek to cross expose other people to other cultures and vice versa. This gesture was given a nod by most guests and members around and this may be a call for the next' year's Heritage Day celebration.



Above photos: Beautiful and vibrant ladies showcasing their cultural dancing skills



Above and below: Regional Manager for Southern Region, Mr Thobuyise Mchunu had his fair share to address guests.



The organizing committee members

At the end Mr Mchunu handed over the microphone to Mr G Mitchell who gave a vote of thanks hereafter it was a moment to taste food and other delicacy.



On the left and above are some of the best dressed entrants who were voted for at the end of the occasion

Indeed it was the winds of changeas Southern Region celebrated the Heritage Day in style.