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SOUTHERN AFRICANS CONVENED IN D.C. FOR A SUCCESSFUL REUNION WEEKEND

Diaspora Southern Africans gathered in the Washington D.C. metro area for a memorable Southern African Reunion.

Silver Spring, MD September 5, 2014

This weekend Southern African Community USA (SACU) hosted its second annual the Southern African Reunion Weekend from August 29th and through September 1st 2014. The event attracted nearly 1,000 Southern Africans this year. The weekend long event took place over the Labor Day holiday weekend which allowed some to travel from neighboring states to come and celebrate Southern African culture with their counterparts in the area. Activities that took place over the reunion weekend included a fashion show, family picnic, party, and professionals networking event.

Southern African Fashion Show - USA:

The weekend kicked off with the Southern African Fashion show on August 29th which was held at the Civic Center in Silver Spring. The evening began with a cocktail hour where attendants were given the opportunity to purchase fashion items being sold by 14 fashion vendors and designers from the region as well as to mingle. They were also able to taste some Southern African cuisine including Meat pies and Samosas and meat pies from Zimbabwe and Chakalaka from Botswana. The fashion show was hosted by Gil Ingles from Angola and Sylvia Litana Robertson from Zambia who kept the crowd entertained throughout the night with an interactive style which included audience participation. The audience included over 200 local celebrities, fashion industry experts and members of the diplomatic corps from Southern Africa. They came to support the venture and to cheer on the designers, models and entertainers.

The designers who showcased their designs included designer's from the continent such as South Africa's Sister Bucks and Namibia's HemLine fashion brands. It also included well know Diaspora designers such as Londiwe from South Africa, SIFA Love from Democratic Republic of Congo, Ma Winny from Tanzania, Bari Creations from Tanzania, Nashona from Tanzania and Marlene Couture from South Africa. Jewelry designers included Zimbabwe's Chic Frills as well as South Africa's LeSoulstice and SA Bazaar. Models came from across the region and included Miss Zambia USA, Anita Ismail and Miss Namibia USA, Tuakondja Veii. In between the fashion displays, the audience was entertained by a flag parade and dance performances by Lyta Boys and Yve La Belle. A special Zambian mother-daughter dance was performed by host Robertson and her daughter Inga Kim which had the audiences cheering. Musical guest Prince T from Zambia got the audience clapping along to his music and South Africa's Luluma read an inspiring poem to the audience. Overall, audiences enjoyed the fashion show and many were excited to see their countries represented on the catwalk. The show was coordinated by co-sponsor, "Cheza! Dance!" and Inga Kim. SACU Founder and Executive Director, Rachel Ngiwete (Namibia) had this to say about the Fashion Show:

"The Fashion Show was a resounding success. We had talented designers from Southern Africa and beautiful models from Africa and the USA."

Southern African Family Picnic:

A family Bring and *Braai* (BBQ) picnic was held on Saturday, August 30 at Valley Mill Park in Silver Spring, MD. This included a day of full of activities for the whole family. Popular Southern African sporting activities netball and football (soccer) were scheduled to entertain the adults. This year eight soccer teams and two netball teams

participated in the sports tournament. The soccer tournament was larger this year. In addition to Angola, Malawi, Namibia & Zimbabwe, newcomers Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia made their debut tournament appearance. Malawi, which was represented by Malawi Football Club, won the trophy for the second year in a row. The prestigious trophy was handed to them by trophy sponsor, Mahama Shipping Company. In netball, the Zimbabwean and Namibian team drew. The title and trophy, which was awarded in the memory of Rege Chorwira by SACU Co-Founder and Director, Cassandra Sibanda (Zimbabwe) was given to both teams. Sibanda had this to say about the netball tournament:

“The future of the SACU netball tournament looked very promising considering that the ladies had not played the game in years but still they played a wonderful game. The game was goal for goal all match and the ladies gave their all. The game ended with a draw. The ladies had a great time and enjoyed themselves immensely.”

Other participants also got involved in the outdoor activities by playing a friendly game of co-ed volleyball which included men women and children. Children’s games with prizes were also coordinated to keep children entertained. SACU Co-Founder and Director, Mimmy Polan (Botswana), who coordinated the children’s activities had this to say about the children’s games:

“The kids had fun with the activities... Kids did not want to stop, they enjoyed the sack race and egg and spoon race. The fun part was seeing their cute little faces light up when they were all given prizes. To me they were all winners.”

Southern African Flag Party

The Reunion Flag Party was held on Sunday, August 31 at Tattoo Bar, one of the top night clubs in Washington D.C. Attendees wore the colors of the national flag and some brought their national flags as accessories to their outfits and waved them on the dance floor to their favorite country hits. The party featured Southern African music by DJ P City (Patient Mumba) from P City DMV Entertainment who kept the crowd dancing with hits from Cape to Congo. SACU Co-Founder and Director, Lisa Netha (Namibia) had this to say about the event:

“The beat from Southern Africa was heard and danced to by many”

Southern African Professionals Networking Event

The weekend concluded with a Professionals Networking Breakfast on Monday, September 1st (Labor Day) at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in Silver Spring. This included a networking workshop where HR representative Mercy Chogugudza, a Human Resources executive with over 20 years’ experience explored the challenging aspects of corporate America that immigrants and other minorities experience and how to use networking as a tool to overcome these challenges. This was followed by a business card exchange between the 30 participants who included Southern Africans and Non-southern Africans alike. SACU Co-Founder and Director, Omega Tawonezvi noted:

“Recent college graduates were connected with potential employers, Service providers also made contacts with potential clients. Everyone is looking forward to the next networking mixer!

The weekend was successfully met its goals of uniting Southern Africans and friends of Southern Africa and increasing the visibility of Southern Africans in the area which are a part of SACU’s mission. SACU Co-Founder and Director, Sitinga Kachipande (Malawi) had this to say about the weekend:

“We are glad to hear positive feedback about all the events this year. We are venturing in to new territory and are receiving a lot of support from our communities. We are proud that we are able to provide a platform where Southern Africans can showcase their talent. We are also thrilled that many people were able to meet new people because part of SACU’s goals are to empower our community and to make our community more visible. We look forward to organizing another successful weekend next year”

The Southern African Reunion weekend is organized by Southern African Community USA, a non-profit organization representing Africans from the countries of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

For more information about SACU and the Reunion weekend event, visit www.southernafricancommunity.org or email: info@southernafricancommunity.org. Contact Sitinga Kachipande at (240) 338-4479 or Cassandra Sibanda at (301) 788-238

Southern African Reunion 2014 in Photos:

Picnic:



The picnic featured over 400 attendees.
 Photo1: Southern African Connection Production crew members Connie and Gaynor with Angolan guest (l).
 Photo 2: Malawi wins title, Photo 3: Zimbabwean netball team, Photo 4: Angolan attendees at the event, Photo 5: Namibian football players hold up their teams jersey, Photo 6: team captains from Angola, Zimbabwe and Malawi, Photo 7: Netball game between Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Southern African Fashion Show - USA:



The fashion show had nearly 200 attendees.
 Photo 1: Marlene Couture from South Africa, Photo 2: Nashona from Tanzania, Photo 3 & 4: Sister Bucs from South Africa, Photo 5: Hosts Sylvia Litana Robertson (r) and Gil Ingles (l), Photo 6: Jewelry by Tracy Lynn Fashions, Photo 7: Vendors and designers sold their designs.

Southern African Professionals Networking Event.



SACU's Professionals Networking Breakfast guest speaker Mercy Chogugudza speaks to professionals from across the region.

Complete photos for all the weekend events can be found at: <http://southernafricancommunity.org/sacu-gallery/>