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SOUTHERN AFRICAN REUNION WEEKEND 2015 WAS A SUCCESS!

Southern African Community USA (SACU) event brought Southern Africans ‘*Together as One*’

Silver Spring, MD

Southern African Community USA (SACU) hosted its third annual Southern African Reunion weekend from August 28th to August 29th in the Washington D.C. Metro area.

Fashion Show & After Party:

The weekend kicked off on with the second annual Southern African Fashion Show on Friday, August 28th at Princess Mhoon Dance Studio in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. The Southern African Fashion show, showcased fashion from the Southern African region and is one of the numerous avenues SACU uses to promote Southern Africa. It serves to educate people about the region and raise cultural awareness whilst simultaneously strengthening community relations within the southern African community. In a country where African aesthetics is often dominated by fashion from East, West, and North Africa, the show provided a platform for designers from Southern Africa and its Diaspora to represent aesthetics that are uniquely Southern African.

The hosts for the evening were: Tapiwa Kandemiri (Zimbabwe), Wilson Maguwah (Zimbabwe) and Andrew Motaung (South Africa) who entertained the crowd with their friendly banter until the end of the event. The 8 designers from Southern Africa that were selected to showcase under the theme, “Together as One” showcased their work. In between the fashion show the crowd was entertained by dancing from ZimUniq, a Zimbabwean Dance group; Mphasto Matenda, a Malawian born poet who works in the development field; Leo na Leo Next Generation is a dynamic dance group consisting of a duo from Tanzania and Uganda; and Mai Afrofusion Dance Fitness by Tsiti a Zimbabwean design instructor who danced for the crowd.

The Featured Designers:

The event features 8 Southern African designers in total. The designers from the Southern African Diaspora included: Nashona by Lilian K. Danieli (Tanzania) - a new fashion forward women’s clothing line that specializes in collaborating unique styles that are chic yet with vibrant fabrics from Tanzania; All Flo Couture (Lesotho) - Chief Creative Officer of *All Flo Couture*, Flory Ramoreboli, has infused the beauty of her homeland into her clothing brand which she describes as revolutionary and non-conformist; Designs by Ariane Fonseca (Angola), was receiving her education in business administration when she started her clothing line for women. She combines religion and fashion to empower women; Gaynor Khan & Margaret Perakis (South Africa) - a graduate of North West School of Design in Klerksdorp, Khan is a talented designer who was awarded the schools coveted ‘Best Designer of the Year’ prize. She was assisted by Margaret Perakis, a South African born school teacher who began making clothes at a young child in exile in Lesotho; VuVu Stone Collection (Zambia) – a brand founded in 2007 by Betty Phiri Chibwe & Oliver Chibwe. They wanted to create a fashion brand that provided the unique touch of exquisite, elegant couture fashion with a touch of Africa; AlmazAfrika (Zimbabwe) - a brand by Almaz Mahati that grew out of the realization that African print is a statement of our heritage and culture; Vituz Place by Vitu Ngwira (Malawi) – Ngwira is a self-taught designer who was inspired to start designing accessories due to her love for vintage, classic and ethnic accessories.

One designer came directly from Southern African this year. Izaura by Mosothi Lesolle was present to represent Botswana. Izaura is a label from a well celebrated fashion designer, stylist, publicist and creative thinker with a vast experience in fashion in

Botswana and the rest of Africa. Although based in Botswana, Lesolle is emerging on the international scene and this was his first show in the U.S. His dramatic fashions led him to receive a standing ovation from the audience who fell in love with his bold cutting edge style. The spouse to the Ambassador to Botswana, Mrs Changu Newman, provided him flowers in appreciation for his work.

Other dignitaries in attendance at the event were official representatives from the countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia. Jane Nankwenya, the Deputy Chief of Mission from Malawi and Ms Prudencia da Silva Embaixateix, spouse to the Ambassador of Angola were also in attendance. Members of the African Affairs Advisor Group who represent Africa in Montgomery County, Maryland were also present.

The event also had a host of vendors from Southern Africa who sold fashion related items during and after the show. An after party followed the event with Southern African music being played by the memorable DJ Samp Deap.

Picnic:

The festivities continued the next day with a family picnic held at Alpha Ridge Park in Mariottsville, Maryland. The picnic was a full day of fun for the entire family, with games planned for the children and Southern African music playing in to the night.

The picnic featured a soccer tournament which saw four teams from Southern African countries compete. This included Teams from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and SANA (a joint Namibia South Africa team) playing for this year's championship trophy. The final game which was played between Malawi and Angola saw Malawi emerge to be declared the Southern African Champions for the third year in a row.

The reunion weekend is the largest gathering of Southern Africans in the United States and is SACU's signature event. Southern African Reunion began in 2013 with the aim of getting Southern Africans and friends of Southern Africa to come together to network, meet, and celebrate Southern African heritage and culture. It is organized by Southern African Community USA.

About SACU:

Southern African Community USA, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) non-profit with a mission is to unite Southern African communities in the USA and to raise the visibility of Southern African communities. It also works on community outreach and advocacy for issues concerning Southern Africans. The organization represents 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. More information about SACU can be found by emailing info@southernafricancommunity.org or visiting www.southernafricancommunity.org.



Malawi (left) and Angola (right) played against each other in the finals.



Malawi Soccer team was represented by Malawi Football Club. Team Captain Charles Mankhusu is presented with the trophy by SACU directors Jeranimo Augusto and Iddy Sandaly. Malawi Washington Association Vice-President Patricia Msaka-Kankondo was there to support MWA. (l) Monda Mwaya, unidentified, Charle Mankusu, Jeranmio Augusto, Patricia-Msaka Kankondo, Iddy Sandaly.



Model Rita Drayton and designer Flory Ramoreboli of All Flo Coutre pose at the picnic (l). Attendees from Zimbabwe share laughs with SACU Director Cassandra Sibanda (pictured in red) and Omega Tawonezvi (pictured right in white pants).



SACU Director, Lisa Netha (Namibia) shares some laughs with friends.



The Zambian soccer team and their supporters grill meat after a long game.



Fashion vendors sold jewelry during the Southern African Reunion Fashion Show



SACU Director Mimmy Polan (pictured in red), shares laughs with friends



Some of SACU board members take a moment to pose for the camera. (l-r) Lisa Netha, Cassandra Banda, Rachel Ngiwete, Omega Tawonzevi, Siaynda Masiza, Sitinga Kachipande, Jeranimo Augsto, and Margaret Perakis (not pictured: Nadine Gauldino, Iddy Sandaly, Mimmy Polan)



Fashion show coordinators Inga Kim (Zambia), Margaret Perakis (South Africa) and Patricia Msaka-Kankondo (Malawi) pose for a photo after the fashion show.



One of the models show off a design by one of the talented designers.



Mothusi Lesolle (pictured in black in the front row) poses with well wishers and attendees after the show.



Attendees at the fashion show