

ADVERTORIAL

SA Heritage is prioritised

The National Heritage Council (NHC) gathered outside Tshwane last weekend to debate the future of our country's heritage. Experts and high profile researchers from the nine provinces shared their views on language, archives, libraries, museums and policy development to co-ordinate the sector. Amongst the speakers were Dr Wally Serote, Chief Executive Officer of the Freedom Park Trust, who hailed the establishment of the NHC and critically raised the need to conscientise the youth and influence school curricula.

Following his exciting input, Dr Wally Serote outlined the following strategic tasks facing the NHC:

- Initiating projects to emancipate the African voice
- Defining the meaning of cultural diversity in our country
- Entering in negotiations with the Department of Education on issues of curriculum
- Mobilising our youth on matters of heritage.

A number of areas that remain submerged beneath intellectual concepts were uncovered and expanded as critical to understanding cultural heritage.

Research

Harriet Deacon, a Senior Consultant at the Human Science Research Council, questioned the amount of research done in the country's heritage. She further raised a need for an audit of all the resources that South Africa can conserve and exhibit to the world. Her research on 'Protecting our cultural capital' that she co-authored and published in 2003, is an interesting anchor for further research. The research paper eloquently defines our heritage and articulates the challenges.

Libraries

Director for Education Libraries in KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Sibongile Nzimande, emphasised her opinion on the optimal use of school libraries in sharing information and not storing knowledge. She advocates for a more intimate co-operation between public and school libraries.

Traditional Leadership

The emancipation of culture from globalisation is one of the challenges raised by the Honourable Kgoshi Setlamorago Thobejane, who is currently the Secretary-General of CON-

TRALESA. He challenged the professional heritage practitioners to find a harmonious medium in addressing the wave of globalisation without eroding the cultures espoused by the traditional leaders.

Museums

Transformation of museums is a central focus in the evolution of heritage for the next decade. Popular views of scholars like Dr Ciraj Rasool, Director of Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of Western Cape, support the involvement of communities in these institutions.

The future of museums should hinge on creating a space for social history collection owned and managed by communities. The ethnological approach of collecting heritage pieces for conservation is definitely and perhaps consciously, faded out to concentrate on depicting a unified South African culture. This paradigm is however not to be profiled at the expense of losing the essence of preserving our history as a nation.

Intangible Heritage

The definition of what heritage entails has, according to Ms

Punla Madiba, received consensus at a number of international forums as containing tangible and intangible aspects. She argues that we need to achieve cultural freedom as a people in order to enrich and expose our intangible history. In this "cultural war to redefine ourselves", each person has a role to play including professionals and communities who lived the history of our diverse cultures.

Language

The recording of our culture cannot be accurately and justifiably reflected in another language. The trend of the use of foreign languages unfairly dilutes the meaning of cultural heritage. Ms Punla Madiba made a classic example of what young Xhosa girls wore as beaded underwear called 'inkciyo' which was recorded as an 'apron'.



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