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THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOR TRADE PARTNERS AND INVESTORS

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The Quarterly Journal for Trade Partners and Investors
Published quarterly in South Africa for the International
Marketing Council by SA Media Services T/A Push Media

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Photography: E-image, SAPA, PictureNet,
The Bigger Picture, SA Tourism

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Journal for Trade Partners and Investors are not necessarily
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Printed in South Africa by CTP, Gauteng, South Africa.

Cover: South African Buyisile Zama plays *Rafiki* in
The Lion King Broadway production.

Picture: E-image, www.eimage.co.za

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POWERING POSS

KNOW YOURSELF

and your heritage

The Mabopana Heritage Centre aims to teach young South Africans to know themselves and their African heritage. Via a series of tutoring and education sessions, the centre will inspire an African re-awakening and teach the country's youth about their culture and heritage.

"Our aim is to address the inhuman conditions under which most of South Africa's people live, re-awakening the African masses and inspiring the youth to take their destiny into their own hands," says Lesego Komane, founder of the Mabopana Heritage Centre.

An affiliate of South Africa's Kara Institute, Komane's initiative shares the same ideology of acquiring knowledge and strategies to be utilised for addressing the promotion and preservation of African heritage. "We want to take the universities to the community, where each youth will teach another to grow and prosper. The Kara Institute has done extensive research in the development of African people and in that regard we have appreciated and were interested in promoting some of the solutions found by the Institute on issues facing African people," explains Komane.

In essence, the Mabopana Heritage Centre will promote learning and education to African people. Professors will assist with tutoring the community on the history of the African people, moving forward past the colonial era. The centre will hold seminars, workshops and conferences to host discussions with all relevant stakeholders that will address the challenges facing the African community.

In terms of youth culture, the centre aims to inculcate the spirit of self-help, self-reliance, self-respect, patriotism and national pride. According to Komane, "This can only be done once the issue of who we are, where we come from and where we have been addressed."

The centre is currently preparing to host a youth heritage conference in Rustenburg, North West Province, funded by the provincial Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. The aim of the conference is to reawaken the African youth on cultural heritage. Speakers include MEC Duma Ndleleni



(Partnership), Prof. Mathole Motshekga (African origins, culture and tradition), Prof. J.J.M. Ndlovu (IKS and African Axioms), Mr Tshidiso Rangaka (Organic farming- Wine), Ms Polo Radebe (BBBEE – Youth participation), Mr Leclar Thekiso (Protection Intellectual Property – IKS), Prof. Lenake (Rites of passage), Adv. Sonwabile Mancotywa (Youth participation – Heritage), and Mrs Lolo Mashiane (Corruption), to name but a few.

But the centre also has other plans in place for the next five years. "We aim to forge partnerships with government departments, business, the public sector and the local community. We will operate

on the basis of Community Public Private Partnerships (CPPP), which will ensure the effectiveness of government departments' role in the development of the community. We also aim to reduce township illiteracy in Mabopane, Tshwane, by about ten percent," says Komane.

The heritage centre will have a profound impact on South Africa's national identity and youth culture. In consultation with the global community, government, and the private sector, the centre will facilitate youth exchange programmes for young South Africans. While growing the African personality in consultation with the country's youth, the centre aims to consolidate the nation's multi-cultures via acknowledging, understanding and accepting who we are.

Economically speaking, heritage translates into gains for the country's youth – the centre has developed a co-operative model for the development of a holistic and sustainable community. Industries to be focused on are Tourism, Arts and Crafts, Organic farming, Educare and catering.

For more information about the heritage centre call 084 304 1207 or email lesego@atlegang.co.za or info@mabopana.co.za

YOUTH DAY

On 16 June 1976 students in South Africa's Soweto township protested against the use of Afrikaans as the education medium. Police responded with teargas and bullets. Today 16 June, National Youth Day, honours the young people who lost their lives in the struggle against apartheid and bantu education.



On 16 June 1976 students from three Soweto schools – Belle Higher Primary, Phefeni Junior Secondary and Morris Isaacson High – planned a march to the Orlando Stadium to hold a meeting. Secondary schooling facilities in the area were struggling – there was a severe lack of facilities, classes were overcrowded, teaches were ill equipped (some hadn't even finished their own schooling), and so the quality of education received was negligible. Despite such negative conditions however, the increasing amount of young black students attending school served a wider purpose – the forging of a national youth movement that acknowledged African culture, language and identity.

In the face of such 'liberation', Afrikaans as a school medium was unacceptable, despite legislation issued by the then Department of Education. Students objected to being taught in the language of the oppressor, and the meeting of 16 June was set to highlight their concerns. Before the student

group reached the stadium however, the police met them in Moema Street, Soweto.

There are conflicting accounts of who gave the first command to shoot, but soon children were turning and running in all directions, leaving some lying wounded on the road, among them Hector Pieterse and Hastings Ndlovu.

"I saw a child fall down. Under a shower of bullets I rushed forward and went for the picture. It had been a peaceful march, the children were told to disperse, they started singing *Nkosi Sikelele*. The police were ordered to shoot," said Sam Nzima.

Nzima's photograph of the dying Hector Pieterse was published around the world, and came to represent the anger and tragedy of a day that would change the course of South African history forever.

Hector, 12, was one of the first casualties of what came to be known as the Soweto Uprising, but another boy, Hastings Ndlovu, is believed to have been the first child to be shot.

The Hector Pieterse Museum in Orlando West, Soweto, is home to Nzima's legendary photograph. The museum, which opened on 16 June 2002, follows the chronology of the build-up to 16 June 1976. The museum's chief curator, Ali Hlongwane, is sensitive to the differing accounts of why that day's protests exploded the way they did.

"The re-representation of the story is an ongoing process," he says, and as such the museum continues to record people's stories and add to its displays.

But that fateful day in June 1976, and the events that followed, had positive consequences: Thousands of students joined the broader liberation movement, ensuring that resistance to apartheid was maintained and escalated; international solidarity movements added to put pressure on the apartheid government; the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was dropped; more schools and a teacher training college were built in Soweto; teachers were given in-service training and encouraged to upgrade their qualifications by being given study grants.

A new generation had made their voice of opposition to apartheid heard and they were determined to be listened to. Many left South Africa to join the armies of the exiled political movements, and those who stayed behind ensured the exiled organisations could count on support from within the townships. June the 16th would never be forgotten.