

**AWARDING OF THE
PRINCESS MAGOGO SOVEREIGNTY AWARD
AT THE GRAND OPENING OF
THE AFRICA CULTURAL FESTIVAL
BY**

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It is an honour for me take this podium to speak again of my mother, Princess Constance Magogo kaDinuzulu, and to honour her memory by presenting the Princess Magogo Sovereignty Award to women of outstanding commitment to the preservation of tradition and the solidarity of a nation. I am richly blessed to have grown up at my mother's knee, receiving from her the heritage of our nation through tales of our history, our strength and our unity. Princess Magogo was my mother, but by her stature and her tremendous spirit she became the mother of a nation; a mother to the Zulu people. Her legacy lives on and is animated by every celebration of culture, tradition and history. I believe her spirit would delight in the Africa Cultural Festival.

The opening of this Festival begins what Mr S.V. Mlambo, its CEO, has referred to as "the African Renaissance in motion". I am enamoured with this phrase, for I believe it perfectly captures the essence of the Africa Cultural Festival. With media coverage in some 150 countries throughout the world, with international dignitaries and guests, and nestled as it is between the International Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia, Discrimination and other forms of Intolerance, International Literacy Day, and AIDS week, this Festival has taken on a new prominence among African celebrations. As African peoples, we have always celebrated our diverse cultures, histories and traditions, largely through the medium of art, believing our identity to be the greatest inheritance we may bestow upon our children.

Through dance, story telling, drama, music, song, painting, beadwork, drumming, and a variety of artistic vehicles, we express our Africanness and our love for Africa. In the

previous millennium, such expressions moved the missionaries, colonialists and explorers to speak about a complex social manifestation, which most failed to fully understand. In truth, the expression of culture, tradition and unity within Africa is mirrored in most every country throughout the world. But in Africa it has something of the unique. There is a depth of solidarity which finds its beginnings in a social philosophy different to that of the Western world. In Africa, I exist by virtue of those around me. I am not merely a product, but an intricate part of my people, my culture and my history. Indeed, the concept of *Ubuntu Botho* was born among Africans as the natural expression of an age-old sense of communal responsibility.

This unity and specific group identity has ensured the preservation of diverse and numerous cultures within South Africa. I am proud to witness the type of cultural celebration experienced since time immemorial within our own communities and tribes being broadcast for the world to see. This is truly the unfolding of a global village. In this new millennium, the dance, music, drama and song of Africa's peoples is fast becoming less of an anthropological oddity while, more and more, it is taking its rightful place as a treasury of information, history, collective consciousness, and cultural expression. I wish my mother could have seen our world opening up the way it is today. She would have appreciated, as I do now, how her life's work is able to touch hearts not only among the Zulus, not only in KwaZulu Natal, not only in South Africa, but in all the corners of the world.

My mother's great love was song. Her musical voice woke me in the mornings, and accompanied everything she put her hand to throughout the day. In fact, I am told that when my father's family met with the Royal family to arrange their marriage, ^{it was reported} ~~my father's~~ ^{by the} ~~family expressed concerns that Princess Magogo was unable to stop singing!~~ ^{the Royal family that she is in good health except for one last thing singing.} Yet what was unusual in my mother was a blessing in the lives of everyone who heard her. She wrote songs and composed music. She arranged performances and mentored talented young voices. She became a legend many artists would follow. Through all this, my mother wove a tapestry of our nation's history, identity and culture. I can think of nothing more fitting than that the Princess Magogo Sovereignty Award should be presented to women with a unique creativity of mind.

My mother created her own footprints. Through her artistic talent, she came to embody Zulu culture. I believe that Princess Constance Magogo gave to my people and to all those who knew her or heard her voice a unique and lasting gift. Hers was the gift of dignity. I remember my mother as a warm and nurturing woman, but somehow in my mind's eye she always stands regally with an unmistakable air of dignity. Her life and her memory bestow dignity on every ^{woman} women who accepts her role with courage and, under the burden of heavy responsibilities, is still able to sing. Maya Angelou, the distinguished writer and poet of former President Bill Clinton, once wrote "I know why the caged bird sings". I feel that many women in my own country know this experience, for many remain trapped in the cage of prejudice, discrimination and inequality, regardless of how far we have come as a new democracy.

Our new democratic Constitution is among the most liberal in the world. We have entrenched the right to dignity and equality within the full body of our law. We have risen up and said that our women will be afforded the same opportunities and benefits as their male counterparts. My personal fight for social justice, which has spanned almost half a century, has always engaged the fight for equality of women. Historically, black women were legally viewed as minors in South Africa and received none of the rights and benefits duly theirs. Women could not own land or access financial assistance. Women could not inherit property. Women were, in fact, relegated to a position of lesser dignity. From such entrenched thinking within our society grew the accepted norm of women earning less, women receiving a poorer education, and women being barred from employment opportunities.

Against this background, I am pleased to hear that today will be celebrated in years to come as the International Day of Action for Women's Equality. I believe it singularly fitting that the Princess Magogo Sovereignty Award should mark the opening of this new chapter of awareness. Princess Magogo gave the example of how a woman can take up an historical role among her people and touch the lives of thousands upon thousands throughout the world. My mother proved that a woman with a broadness of spirit and a creativity of mind can make indelible footprints on the soil of Africa. Today, she represents an ideal to which we are striving as a nation. We wish to give place to

the equal dignity of man and woman in South Africa, knowing at last that it is not a matter of our own discernment but a matter of universal truth.

The wide coverage and extensive interest in the Africa Cultural Festival lends us a unique opportunity to convey a message direct from the heart of our people. Throughout history, performers and artists have mirrored society. Through various art forms, they express what lies at the heart of a people. I trust that the performers and artists, the dancers, filmmakers, and fashion designers taking part in the Africa Cultural Festival this year will expose a work in progress in the heart of our South African nation. Our pursuit of social justice, equality and dignity must be constantly in motion, moving towards full liberation in every aspect of our society. On this occasion, as I remember my mother, I take the opportunity to applaud every South African woman in whom strength, perseverance and joy, seemingly beyond the measure of the natural, have been made manifest.

I encourage each of these women to take up the challenge which lies before our nation, for surely we will need such strength, perseverance and joy to transform a mind set established over centuries of human history. As we celebrate women of exceptional creativity, commitment and strength through the presentation of the Princess Magogo Sovereignty Award, we are giving evidence of a flourishing new way of thinking among our people. We have come a long way. We have a long way to go. I am honoured to be a part of this journey through the life of my mother. She instilled in me a burning passion to see the cause of every South African as my own. By her teaching, I cannot see only one side to the exclusion of all others. She taught me to view a cause from all angles, examining every interest and motivation before deciding on what is right.

American President Lyndon B. Johnson said that the hardest task of a leader is not doing what is right, but knowing what is right. The gift of my mother to me is the ability to seek out what is truly right, rather than assuming that the prevailing trends of political correctness must of necessity express what is right. From the cradle, Princess Magogo gave me a sense of the depth of human experience. The fullness of life cannot be experienced from a two dimensional standpoint. There is strength and frailty in every

human heart. In a measure, there is conviction and love and patriotism in all of us. My mother taught me that every heart is stirred by a good story. I believe she was absolutely right.

The attention of the world has been captivated by South Africa because, after so many years, we finally have a good story to tell. Ours is a story of determination, liberation and change. We have changed for the better and we hold within our grasp the possibility of an ever developing, ever growing, ever brightening future. Within our story is the story of our women, who have learned to sing and bring healing with their voices. The Africa Cultural Festival gives us the opportunity to hear these voices and to express a change in the heart of South Africa. We are celebrating all of Africa's spirit, but I am pleased that we have taken this moment to celebrate this one important aspect of our people. With this evening's awards, we are celebrating women of accomplishment, women of dignity and women of strength. Through the Princess Magogo Sovereignty Award, the memory of my mother is honoured and continues to sow the seeds of equal dignity within our nation.

It is my privilege to bestow this award on the women whom we honour tonight. I wish to congratulate each of them on bringing a contribution of excellence to the good story of South Africa. There are many characters in the story of our country, but few have been chosen to write it.

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