



SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEAF ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA STATEMENT

DeafNative Theatre Festival – Celebrating Artistic Diversity and Transforming Lives

After a series of DeafNative Theatre Awareness Workshops spanning across provinces, South African National Deaf Association (SANDA) will host the first ever DeafNative Theatre Festival at Museum Africa in Newtown on 26 September 2015. This will be a fitting closure to September's Deaf Awareness Month which is celebrated worldwide. The festival will showcase artistic talents and natural rhythm of Deaf people.

SANDA believes that 21 years on, the country's democratic impetus should translate into meaningful improvement in inclusive development in the lives of Deaf people. DeafNative Theatre programme aims to unearth artistic talents, harmonise theatre accessibility and discover Deaf community's social memes through the arts and social dialogue. Indeed, the programme is the testament to evolving South African society and the active self-development of Deaf community which sees Deaf people themselves taking ownership of their own development and therefore able to speak up to redress wrongs.

Currently, there is no legislation that is tailor-made for theatres across the board. Accessibility of Deaf people to mainstream theatre houses is just not possible in the current environment. The new legislation on theatres should be able to accommodate the theatrical needs of the Sign Language community. This is more so as the economic potential of the arts within the Deaf community has yet to be realized. Granted, this will lay the foundations towards linguistic equality and inclusive society.

SANDA's bold initiative is a catalytic development to a new generation of Deaf South Africans taking pride in themselves and producing role models of dramatic artistic successes and artistic leadership. DeafNative Theatre is boldly telling South Africans that, as Deaf people, we are capable of fashioning ideas to effectively produce and perform exciting theatrical experiences and hilarious comedies in South African Sign Language.

As an agent for change, SANDA remains concerned that, nationally and provincially, the artistic and cultural voice of Deaf people has not found sufficient resonance in the policy and decision making processes. It is our view that this must change and a commitment towards an inclusive development agenda that promotes social cohesion across society where artistic diversity is celebrated should be embraced.

Members of the media community are welcome as is anyone who believes that art can impact society.

ENDS.

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