

Promoting the Luthuli Legacy through Culture: A Case study of the Luthuli Museum's Educational Programmes for Children, Youth and Community

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The vision of the Luthuli Museum is “To let the Spirit of Luthuli speak to all.” This vision is what guides the direction of our educational programmes, we hope. This is not just a museum to honour the memory of Chief Luthuli but to keep alive his legacy. The legacy of Chief Luthuli is this “spirit” that must “speak to all” as far as we are concerned. What is the legacy of Chief Luthuli then? Chief Albert John Mvumbi Luthuli was Africa's first Nobel laureate and was president of the ANC from 1952 to 1967. His leadership skills had been honed before he became head of the ANC as a teacher (secretary and later president of the African Teachers Association), as a traditional leader, as a community leader (chair of the Groutville Cane Growers Association and of the Natal and Zululand Cane Growers Association), and as a church leader (president of the Natal Missionary Society and executive member of the South African Church Council). Chief Luthuli brought to the ANC and the liberation struggle in general his values and principles of excellence in leadership, democracy, non-violence, non-racialism, equality for women. These are the elements of the legacy or the spirit of Luthuli that we want to “speak.” Chief Luthuli's words and deeds – his honesty, humility and attitude of service and sacrifice – present us with a true example of *ubuntu*.

The Luthuli Museum is perhaps a little different from many other museums in that it is focused more on ideas and values than objects. (As a curator I don't have too many objects to be precious about.) The challenge we have in educational programming is to promote the legacy of Chief Luthuli through our programmes.

Holiday Programmes

We decided in 2007 to have regular holiday programmes over the school holidays to attract children to the Museum; give them an opportunity to learn new skills while having fun (edutainment) and help to provide an alternative to the attractions of the streets. We have had programmes for younger children – the pre-school to primary school group – as well as for children at high school level. Our greatest success has been at the primary school level, where children have been extremely responsive and enthusiastic about our programmes.

The holiday programmes have included workshops in drama, music, dance, environmental awareness and traditional games and board games, including chess. With regard to dance workshops, we had an interesting experiment where we brought in Ms Sundharie Ramesh from the Kumarie Sundharie Dance Institute to run a workshop on Indian dance. This was followed by a workshop in *isichatamiya* dance. This experiment exposed children of Groutville to a dance form they were not familiar with and also contributed to an understanding of cultural diversity. I would argue that we need more programmes of this nature that encourage cultural interaction.

We have had several story-telling and reading workshops to encourage a culture of learning and a love of books amongst the children. We have run some of these ourselves but have also drawn on the help of the KwaDukuza Library in Stanger.

We introduced a chess workshop as a way of teaching strategic thinking skills. I expected a handful of children to turn up but was pleasantly surprised by the interest in chess even from the younger children. We would like to build on this interest and hope we can have a chess club affiliated to the museum.

We partnered with a project called Hlumisa Greening to do a workshop on environmental awareness. We had met with Hlumisa Greening, who explained their desire to teach children about the planting and care of indigenous trees, in particular the acacias. The idea was to do a trial run with a species of acacia called *umkhanyakude*, which means to shine from afar. *Umkhanyakude* was chosen because of a link with the history of Chief Luthuli. Chief Luthuli's wife was Nokukhanya (the bearer of light). In addition, during the 40th anniversary commemoration of Chief Luthuli's death the then president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, had planted two *umkhanyakude* trees at the site of his so-called accident. For the first workshop we had a good turnout. You would not expect tree planting to be something that would grip the attention of young people. However, the hands-on techniques Hlumisa Greening had come up with had participants eagerly learning about tree planting.

We also ran some more academic programmes in the holidays, although we found that high school students prefer not to be involved in anything to do with school during their holidays. We ran a Basic Research Skills Workshop and one of the teachers at a local high school, Groutville High, somehow persuaded his history class to attend. We followed this workshop up with a Computer-Based Research Skills Workshop run by the U.S. Consulate's Library Department. Only 15 learners responded, but they were an enthusiastic group who spent an hour on the computers after the facilitators had left. A Careers Workshop run during the holidays had a lukewarm response.

Educational Programmes and Public Events

With our educational programmes as well as public events we tried to take cognizance of important commemorative days. We have also partnered with other organizations in many instances, as you will see. What follows is a quick overview of the various educational programmes and public events we have had.

In February we held a debating contest where we had one of our local schools, Nonhlevu Secondary, competing against a school in town, Stanger High School. We decided to kick the year off with a school debate on the controversial topic of Chief Luthuli's death. We pitted Stanger High against one of our local schools. The Nonhlevu High School team argued that "Chief Luthuli died as a result of being run over by a Goods Train and his death was an accident as the government Commission of Inquiry ruled," while their adversaries from Stanger High contended that "Chief Luthuli's death was not an accident, some sinister thing must have happened." We drew 62 participants to this event, including school students and community members.

On 4 March we commemorated Nokukhanya Luthuli's birthday. We had the Nonhlevu High School Choir perform at the event. We invited a panel of four people to share their recollections of Nokukhanya Luthuli. The panel included one of the Luthuli daughters, Mrs Thandeka Luthuli, Ela Gandhi (whose parents had a close association with the Luthulis), two of the neighbours (Mrs M. Mzoneli and Mrs I. Cele) and one of our staff, MaMngadi, who had been close to Nokukhanya in the closing years of her life. At the end of the panel presentations several of the Luthuli descendants and neighbours

shared their recollections of Nokukhanya as well. This was an opportunity to focus on Nokukhanya rather than Chief Luthuli and to bring her role and contribution into focus, and it was greatly appreciated by the Groutville community and the Luthuli family. We were bursting at the seams in our Interpretative Centre with 86 people turning up.

On 11 March we had the Time of the Writer Outreach Workshop, in partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Creative Arts. Three South African writers participated in a presentation at the Luthuli Museum – Mtutuzeli Matshoba, Mandla Langa and Siphiwo Mahala. This was a great opportunity for learners as well as for community members to interact with accomplished writers (143 learners; 176 participants).

On 23 April for World Book Day we held a Story-telling Festival for primary school learners. We hosted 59 learners and 7 educators. A representative from Oxford University Press presented on some of the popular children's books and teachers guides and also gave books to learners and teachers. A local story-teller performed stories and some of the schools put on their own presentations. We then held a session with the teachers where we discussed the challenges in teaching reading skills, especially with regard to English as a second language, and where teachers were able to compare their teaching methods (59 L; 7 T).

An important event we held on 15 May was the International Day of Sharing Life Stories with the theme "Journeys Towards Justice: Capturing Stories of Human Rights in the Context of Migration." We liaised with various NGOs working with migrants and also invited four migrants to share their stories. Several schools brought learners to the event and we also had a number of community members turning up. The people sharing their life-stories included a local Councillor, Nevas Hlatshwayo, who originates from Mozambique; Percy Nhau from Zimbabwe, Robert Oluma from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Joseline Uwizeze from Rwanda. The aim of the event was to encourage dialogue and understanding around issues of migrancy and through that to foster tolerance and appreciation of diversity (82 people participated, including learners from two high schools).

This was followed by an event for International Museum Day on 18 May. We brought a journalist, writer and TV presenter, Dennis Beckett, to speak for International Museum Day. We had performances from the Groutville High School Iscathamiya Group and the Nonhlevu High School Isichatamiya Group.

We participated in the Cell Take a Girl Child to Work Programme on 29 May and hosted twenty learners from a school to the north of us. Chief Luthuli was forthright on issues of women's rights and that is an aspect of his legacy that we need to promote.

On 5 June we invited primary schools to participate in an event for World Environment Day, where we again had Hlumisa Greening run a workshop on tree planting. This was followed by a clean up of the environment around the Museum. Representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs also gave a presentation on the day. We had 155 learners and 12 teachers from 8 schools participating. The environment is something we all need to be passionate about with the problems we are facing on a worldwide level at present (155 learners and 12 teachers).

On 18 July we held a public programme for Mandela Day. We invited community members to participate in a clean up of Nokukhanyua Luthuli Street and surrounding streets. This was followed by a talk on "Nelson Mandela and his Legacy." The

community turned up in numbers, with 150 participants for the day. A local security firm, G4 Security provided a generous donation of T-shirts for the event.

At the end of July we ran a week-long screening of the Durban International Film Festival at the Museum. A number of the documentaries were particularly useful for the schools – one on John Dube and another on the Timbuktu Manuscripts in particular. For two of the screenings we had film-makers come in to talk about their films. This was an opportunity for young people interested in film-making to enter into dialogue with the film-makers. One of the producers who attended also gave some of the young people an opportunity to play the roles of camera crew and sound technicians.

In observance of International Youth Day we held a Leadership Workshop on 12 August, where we encouraged high schools to send learners in positions of leadership and responsibility – prefects, monitors, class representatives and the captains of sports and social clubs. We had two speakers doing presentations – Dr Catherine Burns, an historian involved in research on HIV/AIDS, and Mr Edmund Mhlongo, who founded a youth arts and multimedia empowerment organization in KwaMashu township in Durban. We had a far greater attendance than we expected, with 85 learners turning up.

On 8 September we held an event for International Literacy Day, with Councillor Luthuli giving a keynote address and the Family Literacy Project doing a presentation on their approach to literacy. We had a good turnout from the community and also had a number of primary school principals and teachers attending (93 people attended).

On 21 September we celebrated the International Day of Peace with a seminar on “Chief Luthuli and Peace.” We invited two speakers – Rev Scott Couper of the UCCSA, who has completed a PhD thesis on Chief Luthuli and Tor Sellstrom of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). We had participation from community members, with 44 people attending, and once again there was good dialogue on issues of peace.

On 6 October we held the Poetry Africa Outreach Workshop in partnership with the Centre for Creative Arts (UKZN), who brought four poets – Susan Kiguli from Uganda and three South Africans, Jennifer Ferguson, Lesego Rampoleng and Dr Wally Serote, presented their works. Learners and members of the public were given an opportunity to present some of their poetry and received feedback from the poets. Several of our Poetry Club members recited their works.

Competitions

In developing our educational plan for 2009 we considered ways in which to get high school students interested in Chief Luthuli’s history and legacy.

We also ran an Art Competition for Primary Schools and an Art and Poetry Competition for High Schools in the iLembe Municipal District. For the primary schools, learners were required to do artwork that reflected on Chief Luthuli as a Leader. High school learners were invited to submit artworks and poetry on the theme “Chief Luthuli and excellence in leadership.” An awards event was held at the Museum during the April holiday break, and learners were encouraged to bring their parents to the awards. In order to give the competition a boost we provided really good prizes, including a laptop (for first position in poetry), digital cameras and ipods.

One of the aims of the art and poetry competitions was to get learners to come in to the Museum to do research on the themes. Another was to get young people to engage

with the story of Chief Luthuli's life. We found that while some learners did come in to look for materials and information many drew solely on their creative imagination. At some of the schools teachers encouraged learners to participate. Perhaps this is an aspect we need to consider: should we attempt to draw in greater participation from schools and how should we go about doing so? We also found that learners from schools in Tongaat to the south as well as some schools further north in Empangeni expressed an interest in participating but we had to limit the competition to the iLembe District to make it manageable.

Outreach

For World Refugee Day on 20 June we took our mini-exhibition on "Xenophobia" to Nonhlevu Secondary School and did a brief presentation for the school assembly, after which learners were encouraged to view the exhibition and hold a discussion on tolerance and cultural diversity.

We were invited to do a presentation at a rural school to the north of us, Nonoti Primary, on Environmental Awareness on 4 September. This also gave us an opportunity to take our pop-up exhibition on Chief Luthuli. We were also asked to speak at a Heritage Day Celebration at a local school, Nkukwini Primary, where we set up the Luthuli pop-up banner exhibition and addressed a crowd of 1200, including learners, teachers and parents. We would like to engage in more outreach activities but are limited by our busy schedule of programmes as well as by the size of our staff.

We have managed to run a diverse and busy educational programme and public events schedule with a fairly small budget. We have been fortunate to be able to run collaborative programmes with various partners. We have also at times received generous sponsorship from local caterers and other local businesses. Our challenge is to sustain and deepen our educational programmes and public events so as to keep alive the spirit of Chief Luthuli and other leaders whose legacies can serve as a foundation for the development of our youth and country.