

## We are also white!

**A group of four young black entrepreneurs embrace their white heritage through a rich sport.**

*What started as a rescue plan for an ailing multi-million rand golf club on Durban South within an affluent white community led to an ignition of a passion for golf within Durban's Kwa Mashu Township as poor black people embraced and celebrated their white heritage in the spirit of Madiba.*

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**J.G. Zuma High School, Kwa Mashu, South Africa** – was host to an “invasion” of the Durban township, on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014, in a form of a lifestyle practice usually considered foreign to these neighbourhoods. On a day affectionately referred to as Mandela Day, a known global call to action that celebrates the idea that each individual has the power to transform the world, the ability to make an impact in celebration of the ethos embodied through the iconic life of Nelson Mandela. On this particular day: armed with a few golf clubs, four black entrepreneurs: Matimba Ngwenya, Shadrack Kubyane, Bayekeni Thenga and Pretty Sirayi, accompanied by volunteers; advanced towards the INK basin i.e. the Inanda, Ntuzuma and Kwa Mashu townships with a single focus in mind. Not to clean the streets, as is usually the practice by the locals, but to cause a tangible disruption in the minds of those that call these dangerous townships home.

Setting up, a golf kit on the periphery of the INK basin township cluster, as early as 8am, they started playing golf, hardly focusing on the surprised looks of passer-by vehicles and pedestrians. Later playing at various spots, joined by volunteers and strangers. By the end of that day they had successfully given an opportunity to people that one might have never associated with golf, to play and enjoy golf. Playing this sport, which is traditionally confined to the green, on well-maintained golf estates [white communities], out of reach to ordinary citizens, [link the thoughts] this sport was played on the streets next to shack dwellings, in taxi ranks, shopping malls and at the only school in the world that is named after His Excellency President Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma.

“Golf is not for only for white people, we can also play this thing”, a young six year old black boy proclaimed from within the township, his face beaming, after taking a few swings at the tiny white balls. His hearty sentiments were echoed by: Mr. Mthembu, JG Zuma School principal, Councillor Madlala, and other community leaders present.

Mandela Day also provides an ideal platform to reflect on South Africa’s history, as it relates to the struggle for freedom, given its history, pre-liberation. Looking back at the victory secured by the elders that championed South Africa’s political freedom, one quickly notices the out of the box thinking that preluded the 94 elections. Take

for an instance: pre 94, at the height of the apartheid regime's most intense evil moments, the wisdom of these elders was to realise that to conquer this monster of hatred they will need to use even the most unconventional tools to achieve liberation.

A western invented mode of transport, in a form of motor vehicles, ironically became one of efficient sources of weapons to poor black people back then, when they realised that this "white man's piece of technology" is actually an answer to their prayers. When most white people at the time typically viewed car tyres as a component in the vehicle, a black man in desperation for freedom discovered: a combustible weapon, in these rubber items, which when lit up, became efficient items to barricade streets, lobby global attention and at times punish "impimpi" [spies] – using what was known as the necklace method - amongst the community. In the same token: the poor man's grenade otherwise commonly referred to as "petrol bombs", became also became a preferred tool of choice as these items went airborne - fuelled by anger - towards their sporadic targets.

What does freedom mean to many, in 2014, especially the born-frees and all citizens of the republic? This question conjures up: uncertainty, and hope as emblazoned across various political manifestos and ideologies alike, including policy framework such as the reigning BBBEE, Affirmative action, BEE, and notwithstanding the current tender system which many claim has failed the majority.

Post South Africa's first democratic election, the anxious call and intense pursuit for economic freedom has been emphasised by many amongst the South African society, from political parties to religious bodies, social activists, the private sector and ordinary citizens alike. Some in their plight towards the achievement of this end result have resorted to drastic measures, strong rhetoric, violence and at times undesirable stunts. The move by the four young black entrepreneurs, viewed from far, is likely to be categorised amongst those: attention seeking stunts, until one zooms in carefully, and discovers that the four entrepreneurs here are unapologetic about the whiteness they had discovered and come to appreciate within themselves; neither are they asking other black people to become white, but simply to become honest with themselves too.

If black people were to embark on a joint soul search, we may soon realise that the white heritage in most if not all black people is plainly evident in almost everything we gravitate towards, identify with, pronounce, touch, consume, appreciate, use, purchase, prepare for supper, drive, build or rent, smoke and drink. Western DNA has left its indelible mark on African soil, and one cannot help but pity the African black elder who complains about "these kids of today" being too modern, and too white, but then he pauses and takes a sip on some western brewed malt. In essence: we are all white, irrespective of our very distinct indigenous African heritage, roots and black pride. Not to be seen as a clash of cultures but a melting pot, worth celebrating.

That is what the team of these four young black entrepreneurs, agents of economic change and turn-around practitioners discovered as far back as their rural childhood. Recently they were led to engage towards the professionally taking on of a project that entails the rescuing an eco-magnificent golf course, on Durban's south basin, the only one remaining of its kind due to its green lung status within the community. Quite early in the assignment they realised the task to rescue the golf course from

guaranteed ruin will require input from an unlikely source: a young impoverished black 9 year old girl, Thembi, from Kwa Mashu township when given the opportunity to come through to the golf course with her 599 peers, of the same age and from similar impoverished backgrounds, to train on how to play golf recreationally and professionally, to prospectively travel the world playing this sport, which is commonly associated with wealth, as it transforms their lives forever. When finally allowed onto that green elusive turf that was previously out of reach to them, and their families.

In the meantime, in search of these young girls, on one of their visits to the infamous crime ridden townships, the project management team, joined in by volunteers that were equally inclined to happily embrace the whiteness in them through this iconic sport that speaks of discipline, luxury, prestige and is synonymously symbolic of wealth.

One cannot help but acknowledge the potent aspect of the golf club, perceived through the eyes of thirst for economic change. Looking at what this metal club represents, what it says to those swinging it, to onlookers, well-wishers and those immersed into the sport as a profession is all more evident when one observes the looks and reactions stemming from all those they have been coming into contact with during the street golf experience. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive.

Beyond the cultural, lifestyle and ideological invasion, and recreational interactions with these communities: calls for assistance in establishing the sporting among these communities have been growing, from the police service, schools, and streets. Deliberations are underway to weigh on these calls for help, parallel to establishing the Thembi School of Excellence. An opportunity exists for like-minded investors, government and various stakeholders to take ownership of and propel these developments forward.

Embraced correctly, not as a symbol of violence but an economic tool, a golf stick can bring clarity of thought as the player rises their eyes far above the employment-prone mind-sets, to eventually not merely desire to be an employee but an employer to others, to ultimately not want to be a CEO but a captain of his industry at some point.

To find out more about this social cohesion campaign and its related aspects email: [projects@skconsulting.co.za](mailto:projects@skconsulting.co.za), [@thembiswings](https://twitter.com/thembiswings), [#Thembiswings](https://facebook.com/thembiswings) or [thembiswings.weebly.com](http://thembiswings.weebly.com).

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