

Critics of renaming motivated by racism

ON HUMAN Rights Day, 21 March 2005, I said:

"Today the municipality is going to make one more small step towards restoring the dignity and the human rights of the majority of the people of the city.

"These may be small steps but as symbols of recognition and acknowledgement they have an enormous impact. They will show the people of the city that true change, visible and tangible change that affects their hearts and minds, is underway. The names of the heroes and leaders they used to cheer for will be appearing on buildings and street signs."

This was the day we renamed the Martin West Building in Smith Street, the Florence Mkhize Building after our beloved icon Mam Flo, and the M4, the Nkosi Albert Luthuli Highway, so that visitors who land at our airport can come into the city on a highway named after Africa's first Nobel Peace Prize winner and President of the ANC.

I explained then that we all know there are many examples of African achievements and endeavours that have been marginalised over the centuries and ignored, in the interests of perpetuating stereotypes that we Africans are primitive, backward and less than



Obed Mlaba
eThekweni Mayor

human. And here we are, at the beginning of 2007 – once again involved in "The Street Names Issue".

It is sad this should even still be an issue after 13 years of democracy. And those very people

today who are complaining about the renaming of streets and erecting of statues are most often people who still see Africans and Indians and their heritage as less than human. Have you noticed how these complainers are so often suddenly concerned about the poor? That is often their argument for not renaming streets – they say that it will cost too much; rather spend it on the poor.

Is anyone really fooled by this argument? Do they really think they can mask their racism by disguising it as concern for the poor? Maybe they are just embarrassed to think they might live in a street with a name they can't pronounce. Or worse, a street that shares a name with their domestic worker or messenger.

This is not even a difficult matter – it is a given. South Africans, black and white will not be truly liberated if the face of our cities and towns do not reflect the mixed cultures of all our people. Our people need to feel a sense of pride when they walk or drive through the city, it won't feel like they are living in someone else's city anymore – it will feel like home.

Pride and prejudice: A lesson from Goa

CLATTERING down the road from Goa Airport to our week's

timeshare swop in India, the taxi driver kept chattering away to us, looking back to talk and then hooting every 10 seconds or so as he negotiated past pedestrians, cars, trucks, buses and motorcycles on the windy and narrow roads.

Every second sentence began with a statement on how wonderful Goa was and that we would definitely return every year. He claimed to have had no formal education, and learnt to drive trucks and then taxis the hard way and for a number of years drove them without a licence. And when we told him we had two children, he said they must come to Goa. For him it was paradise on earth for tourists, the greenest area, the friendliest people and the best beaches.

This passion and love for his home, in spite of the poverty in which he and his family lived, stood in stark contrast to comments from a colleague who informed me when I told him we were going to Goa, that two British tourists had recently been attacked there.

By way of contrast, beginning our flight we happened to sit in front of a man from Durban, who within seconds of sitting down had introduced himself to the person sitting next to him. This person was an Indian national who was working in South Africa and was returning for a short break to India. His family were due to come back



Michael Sutcliffe
eThekweni Manager

with him to live while he worked in South Africa.

For the purposes of this column, let's call the Durbanite "Henry Smith", who, without any real introduction, said: "Oh, but if it wasn't

for the crime South Africa would be wonderful". "Henry" then went on telling the person how bad the crime was, that everyone was leaving and while he was from Britain and had spent most of his adult life in South Africa, he was going to retire to Australia because of South Africa's crime. Little was said of how wonderful South Africa was, and which had made him choose it as his home for most of his adult life. Just lots of grisly detail, none his own experience. What topped it all were rather silly theories as to why crime was high, never once referring to poverty, inequality or the role of syndicates which are probably our biggest challenges in dealing with crime.

The tragedy was that "Henry" was part of a delegation of travel agents from a well-known Durban-based travel company who were visiting India to promote tourism to South Africa. He was our ambassador and I cringed at the thought, for it could only be the lure of the lucre which would motivate him to sell our country. I wished we were choosing passionate taxi drivers to sell our country, because the more we sell it with passion, the more passionate people will ensure we find solutions to crime, and the less we will rely on those who simply want to take their money and run.

FLIPPIN' BRILLIANT



ANTON Kieck took this picture of Amanzimtoti bodyboarder Vincent 'Vinny' Bradshaw. Here Vincent performs a radical aerial manoeuvre in the shore-break at Amanzimtoti during the Southern KwaZulu-Natal Lifesaving Championships on 28 January. Send your Durban photographs to eZasegasini Metro, PO Box 5588, Durban, 4001; or e-mail spincity@durban.gov.za or naidothrusha@durban.gov.za and we will publish the best high-resolution photos. Please provide your details and the names of the people in your picture

LETTERS

Publicise recycling efforts

THE report "Going places" (eZasegasini Metro, 26 January), about the municipality winning the Vuna Award, refers to a major Durban Solid Waste project.

These buy-back (recycling) and community drop off centres are good news. However, they need to be publicised regularly, in the eZasegasini Metro and MetroBeat so that people become aware of where they are located and how they work.

Fireworks policy flawed

THE municipality's proposed fireworks policy is out of order and insanely flawed.

The advertising of the policy on its website is both surreptitious and rough. Safety and security laws are a national responsibility. Local municipalities must not usurp that function; otherwise there will be mass confusion and chaos throughout the country.

eThekweni's fireworks policy must be "imploded" as it is anti-Hindu, violates human rights and is unconstitutional.

Why does the council target the innocent Hindu community, which is well respected, highly responsible, God-fearing and great animal lovers? The policy must be challenged at the highest legal level.

M D DASARATH
Umhlathuzana

Most people in the city have no idea of the whereabouts of the 23 centres or how they operate.

Also, the free waste disposal depots need to be publicised.

Too many articles, which the normal weekly refuse collection cannot accommodate, are dumped in the street and remain an eyesore for days or weeks.

A Durban shop recently sold T-shirts with a logo welcoming people to "Dirty Durban".

City Manager Michael Sutcliffe castigated the shop with a sort of "sour grapes" comment, saying: "We won an award recently as the cleanest city in South Africa".

Well, the sanitation and raw sewage (although E. coli levels are sometimes borderline at our beaches, despite some having Blue Flag status) might be well structured and run, but the litter, please!

Heaven help all the other municipalities if eThekweni is the best the country can manage.

The suburban streets, which I visit frequently, are a disgrace as far as litter is concerned and it has

not improved in the past 10 years.

JOHN BAYLISS
Glenwood

THANK you for your recommendations. DSW offers waste management products, facilities and services to the public, however it is the individual's responsibility to manage his waste correctly and use these resources.

DSW has recycling centres and garden refuse sites strategically located within eThekweni, allowing for easy access. These sites are open daily and accept recyclables such as paper, glass, cardboard, scrap metal and plastic. DSW's garden refuse sites are open to residents only, daily from 7am to 5pm. Residents are allowed to dispose two free bakkie loads a day. Call the DSW Customer Service Line, 031 311 8804, for details.

NEERI GOVENDER
DSW Public Relations Officer

See page 5 for a report on DSW's recycling centres.

Traffic circles the answer

ON A VISIT to Lusaka, Zambia, I noticed few traffic lights at intersections, mostly traffic circles.

Lusaka is a big city, like Durban, yet the only traffic lights I saw were in the city centre, for pedestrians. Even in the industrial areas there were only traffic circles.

eThekweni would save if it did away with traffic lights. We would avoid the expense of repairing faulty robots.

And no money need be spent on

replacing knocked-over light poles.

I also visited Kabwe (formerly known as Broken Hill). There too, were only traffic circles.

The maintenance with traffic circles is to keep the grass and flowers from growing too long, lest it blocks motorists' view.

Not much labour is needed for this system.

RM TOVEY
Link Hills