

Ekurhuleni's 16th Annual Pride Festival Celebrated In Springs

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The Ekurhuleni Pride Organizing Committee (EPOC), together with Zigzag Café (a club in Springs) hosted the 16th Ekurhuleni Pride Festival in Springs' CBD. Held on a sunny morning on Saturday, 9 September 2023, queer people in and around Ekurhuleni gathered at the Springs Hotel where the march started.

The march was led together by the Speaker of Council Nthabiseng Tshivhenga, Ward 74 Councilor Thulane Simelane, founder of EPOC Ntsupe Mohapi and a councilor from Katlehong. It started on 1st Street in Springs before it went down to Zigzag Café on 7th Street.

On Thursday, 31 August 2023, the EPOC in collaboration with Iranti (a media advocacy organization defending the human rights of transgender, intersex, and lesbians) hosted a Queer Mothers Dialogue, where the LGBTIQ+ community together with the mothers who are also allies, conversed on issues touching the queer community in preparation of Pride's annual celebration.

Before the march, the day started with a formal program which had speakers talking about the work they do as organisations. In attendance were organisations such as Aurum, PFSAQ, SA Queer Movement and Access Chapter 2, which also helped sponsor the event. During the event, some attendees were asked to explain what Pride meant to them.

Zanele Ngcobo, a lesbian identifying woman from Uthingo (an organisation in Daveyton) said "Pride means awareness... Showing people that we are here, and we are alive." She then added, "It's also very important to be safe during Pride. Thanks to the organizers we had EMPD escorting us as we marched, and we also had security at the venue."

Fufu Mashifane, who is a mother to a queer child, an ally and activist, said "It's a day where we make communities aware that we belong on this planet called earth, reminding them that we are normal, and to plea with them to have tolerance to other human beings. Also, to celebrate the rights of queer people by marching the streets of our townships, waving our flags, and dressing up for the occasion."

Reverend Tebogo Moema, who is a gay man and is also casted on the reality show on Moja Love, "Abafundisi," explained the importance of Pride saying, "What this means to us as the queer tribe is; we are seen and visible versus, we are not seen and invisible. We are heard in all the right places, [including] government, corporate, cultural, institutions and by the society. No more voiceless, sidelined, dehumanized, and excluded queers-our, voices matters!"

Moema concluded by saying, "More penetration of the society at large is still a must do. Action with perpetuity 'til all fears collapse in the minds and hearts of [fellow] human beings, and diversity is fully understood and accepted. 'Till then we must continue to preserve our gains whilst pushing to gain new grounds with mutual collective voice as queer people. Phambili (forward)!"

The event was full with other organisations such as Khathorus LGBTQIA+ Forum from Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus, Thato One Big Family LGBTQIA+ Society from Tembisa, Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) and many other organisations were a part of this colorful

celebration. The celebrations ended with music and fun where they had DJ Maphorisa, Morda, Lebo Molax, Somizi, Lasizwe and many more on the line up.