

Operation Dudula Disrupts Human Rights Festival

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The Foundation for Human Rights hosted the 5th Annual Human Rights Festival four days after Human Rights Day, on 25 – 26 March 2023 at Constitution Hill. The event consisted of adult literacy and children literature series, which boasted a lot of young writers, readers and storytellers from the age of 10 and older. Young people who believe that reading as individuals can change the world that we live in. The event also had a lot of social justice movements like Green Peace, Equal Education, International Research and Labour Information Group (ILRIG), Bridge Books and Khanya College, just to mention a few.

The initiative to bring together people from different organizations, communities and age groups. This was helpful especially when it comes to being an author and being a publisher. Small authors only make about 7% out of their books that are sold because retailers and publishers also take their share from the sale. This is what is making it difficult to get published as an individual, and it becomes worse with the mainstream publishers.

The event also featured Green Peace Africa which is an organization that focuses on maintaining the environment and does its work through environmental campaigning.

While the festival went on members of Operation Dudula showed at the party causing a stir. Dudula members marched in the yard, in between people's stalls telling the people in attendance that Operation Dudula movement is here to stay. The marchers say the reason for the march was because they feel that the chapter 9 institution is not benefiting South Africans. One of the leaders of the march said that "South Africans are displaced by these foreigners who are all over our country. We are overpopulated because of them, and this chapter 9 institution is assisting them to be in the country illegally."

They feel that it is only in South Africa where undocumented immigrants can do as they please because if you go to other countries its not easy. The infamous Dudula operators also said that the South African constitution needs to be strengthened regarding migration. The marchers also had a slogan saying, "illegal immigrants are a burden to the economy." Karen* said, "I understand their motive but why do they have to disturb the festival that was not organized but them or for them?"

A lot of people at Constitution Hill felt that the march by the Operation Dudula group was unnecessary and had a bad timing and that the group should understand that South Africa belongs to All Africans.

"Besides, Operation Dudula hides itself behind the senior citizen and kids in the forefront," said Malebo. She also said that the movement is not teaching these children anything political because if they did, they would know better that South African militants once found home in other African countries and came back with the skills to fight the apartheid government. One Tumelo felt like since it was Human Rights Festival Operation Dudula had every right to be there and to exercise their right to protest, and freedom of expression.

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