

ConHill Human Rights Festival as Democracy Turns Thirty

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The 2024 Human Rights Festival was held at the Constitutional Hill in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, between 21 – 24 March. The Human Rights Day in South Africa is a commemoration of 21 March 1960 in relation to the events that took place in Sharpeville, Vereeniging, where 69 people were shot and killed as another 186, at least, were wounded when the police opened fire on a group of peaceful marchers who had gathered to protest pass laws.

On day one of the festival there was a discussion on the genocide currently taking place in Palestine, different organisations participated in the discussion.

For the course of the Festival, there were different stalls from various organisations, it was a way of making people aware of the services on offer and also an easy way to towards some outreach.

Different people visited the stalls and got more information about the organisations. The stalls included the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, We The People, Access 23, Legal Resources Centre, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, BrightSpark Foundation SA, Equal Education, IEC officials, UJ Law Faculty, Soul City Institute, Section 27, Right to Protest, Freedom of Expression and many more.

Zakhele Mbatha (22) from Tembisa, said he found the festival very helpful because he thought it helped people learn more about South African history but unfortunately it only takes place once a year. Mbatha concluded by saying that South African rights are violated and mislead.

This festival celebrations also featured music and performances followed by conversations about the importance of the queer community's vote. People from different backgrounds and age groups were gathered in one space celebrating human rights and were hoping the system might change.

"This festival helped different artists to work with each other. A lot of these festivals are needed in our communities because not everyone can afford to go to Braamfontein and our country is [in] need of new leaders who will protect the humanity of our country because there's a lot of human rights violations in our country," said Fredah Modeselle (38) from Pretoria who is the Gauteng's Rise Mzansi's leader for Art, culture and sports.

"The festival aimed [at spreading] awareness and knowledge around human rights, and promote the importance of an active citizenry," said the acting CEO of Constitutional Hill, Mr. Siyabonga Hlongwane.

The celebrations included talk about youth and human rights. It was brought to a curtain lowering by a walk and a tour around the Constitutional Hill.

"By emphasising the pivotal role of young people in democratic processes and their capacity to advocate for social justice, this meaningful dialogue engagement allowed a collaborative effort in building a culture of active citizenship and civic engagement

as youth. By Emphasising everyday micro-actions and practical strategies at a community level, young people were produced with avenues for organising and mobilising communities to address pressing social justice issues such as inequality, discrimination and human rights abuses," commented Moeketsi Koahela, the Education and Training Officer of the Youth Activism Programme at the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and Chairperson of the National Youth Coalition (NYC).

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