

Soweto Creatives Takes a Stand for Artist Access to Spaces

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For years, artists in communities like Soweto have struggled to find accessible spaces to practice and showcase their crafts. Existing spaces often cater to those who can afford them, excluding community members who do not fit the mold or cannot afford the cost of securing these spaces.

On Friday, 28 March 2025, artists in Soweto were invited to participate in a street protest outside Soweto Theatre. Due to bad weather conditions and other commitments, the street protest did not take place. Instead it was turned into a meeting that provided a platform for artists to share their concerns about the lack of access to such spaces.

As the meeting concluded, police arrived and asked to speak with one of the leaders, Paul Noko Mutwasagule. Shortly after, Mutwasagule informed the group that they were being asked to leave the space after signing the register. There was anger among the artists, ironically highlighting the very issue they were fighting for.

The group of artists have since formed a movement that represents all artists in seeking community spaces. They believe these spaces can serve as lifelines for all marginalised artists, particularly in working class communities.

“The movement seeks to confront the challenges of the artists around Soweto, and create a working relationship between [the] Soweto Theatre and the artist so that these artists can access the theatre,” said Seiphemo Motswiri from African Tree Productions.

Themba, commonly called Fire, from Motion explained that “the movement is about creating a platform for artists and it represents freedom to portray how I feel artistically.” Fire also shared that he is happy and sad about the protest's outcome, acknowledging the importance of peaceful protest.

The meeting outside Soweto Theatre marked the beginning of a collective effort to gather more artists, collect data, and plan further action. Despite the challenges of that day, the movement is encouraging more artists to join the initiative.

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