



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
HEALTH
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Victoria Mxenge Hospital

EzaseKhangela

NEWS

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A SPECTACULAR CULTURAL WEDDING CELEBRATION AT VICTORIA MXENGE HOSPITAL



On September 26, 2024 Victoria Mxenge Hospital (VMH) hosted an extraordinary event that brought together the hospital community in a vibrant display of cultural unity, diversity and shared heritage. The Cultural Wedding Play, held in the grass area outside the hospital's Jubilee Hall, was an elaborate, symbolic event aimed at depicting the coming together of different cultures, timed perfectly for Heritage Month. The ceremony, which began at 11:00 a.m., featured rich cultural traditions, beautifully intertwined to highlight the Zulu and Indian heritages of the bride and groom.

The event was the result of months of careful planning, orchestrated by various departments within the hospital, all working together to ensure its success. From the décor to the music, cuisine and ceremonial acts, the day was a true reflection of the diverse backgrounds of the VMH family.

The Grand Arrival: A Royal Entrance

The bride, played by Mrs. L. Pillay from the Nursing

(Inservice Training) Department, was the symbolic figure for the Indian community. She departed from her "homestead" at St. Aidan's Hospital, which was her first place of employment before moving to Victoria Mxenge. Staff members at St Aidan's danced and sang as a sign of send-off of their daughter. As part of the event's grandeur, three luxury vehicles sponsored by Audi transported her to Victoria Mxenge Hospital, where the cultural wedding play was set to take place.

The bride's arrival was nothing short of regal. She was accompanied by her bridesmaids, all adorned in stunning Indian traditional attire, and her parents, played by Ms. Printher Govender from the Paediatric Department and Mr. K.P. Govender from the CT Scan Department, who are also hospital employees. This arrival symbolized not only her personal journey but also the blending of different cultural heritages. Before the cars pulled up, the VMH choir filled the air with harmonious wedding hymns, setting a deeply emotional and celebratory tone for the day.

The hospital's Jubilee Hall had been magnificently transformed, thanks to the talented efforts of Ms. Nompumelelo Zuma who did the decor & Mr. Soonesh Sekundar who assisted in sound both coming from the Pharmacy Department. Nompumelelo's skills in decoration and attention to cultural details ensured that the hall reflected the fusion of Zulu and Indian traditions. Soonesh was then instrumental in organizing the sound system, supported by Emmanuel from the Maintenance Department and Avinash from X-Ray, worked diligently to ensure all technical aspects of the day went smoothly.

The Groom's Entrance: A Cultural Procession

While the bride made her grand entrance, the groom, played by Mr. Dlamini from the Systems (Maintenance) Department, followed suit with his groomsmen. In a traditional Zulu manner, Mr. Dlamini was accompanied by ibutho lezinsizwa (a group of young Zulu men), symbolically escorting him from the Maintenance Department to Jubilee Hall. The groom's procession was filled with traditional Zulu chants and ululations, creating a palpable

sense of excitement and cultural pride.

Mr. Dlamini's arrival was steeped in Zulu wedding customs. As he approached isigcawu, the cultural wedding play continued to merge both Zulu and Indian traditions.





His entrance symbolized strength, unity and the powerful bond that would soon be celebrated between the two families.

The groom's parents, played by Ms. Nomathemba Gudase from Paediatric Department and Mr. Ngema from the Systems Department, took part in welcoming the bride into the family, symbolizing the union of the two cultures through marriage.

The Ceremony: A Blend of Cultures

Once both the bride and groom were present, the symbolic wedding ceremony began, blending Zulu and Indian customs in a display that was both mesmerizing and deeply meaningful. At the center of the Zulu tradition, the bride was questioned three times by the iphoyisa, played by Mr. Sifiso Skhakhane from Critical Care Unit, whether she was willingly accepting Mr. Dlamini as her husband. This was an important ritual, as it emphasized the bride's consent and personal choice in entering the union.

After affirming her willingness three times, Mr. Dlamini performed the traditional Zulu dance, ukugiya, showing his joy and excitement about the union. His energetic dance symbolized not only the pride of his Zulu

heritage but also his happiness in marrying his Indian bride.

As the bride left to change into her Zulu imvunulo (traditional Zulu attire), entertainment took center stage. The VMH choir performed a series of traditional hymns, followed by an isicathamiya group showcasing their powerful vocal harmonies. This was complemented by Indian cultural dances, highlighting the richness of both communities' traditions. The entertainment allowed guests to immerse themselves in the cultural exchange that was unfolding before their eyes.

Cultural Exchange: The Second Entrance

After the performances, the bride re-entered isigcawu, this time fully dressed as a Zulu Makoti (bride), marking her acceptance into the Zulu family. She was accompanied by her izimpelesi (bridesmaids) and members of the groom's family, who walked before her, symbolizing her introduction into a new cultural chapter of her life. In front of makoti were the groom's aunts, sweeping the pathway, a gesture that symbolized the clearing of obstacles for the new bride.

The transformation of the bride from her Indian attire to the Zulu imvunulo was a pivotal moment in the ceremony, signifying her full embrace of her new family's culture. *The fusion of the two traditions was beautifully executed, showing how two vastly different cultures could come together in harmony.* As she made her way to the groom, singing and dancing between the two families ensued, celebrating the union.

The groom's family, represented by abomama bakaMkwenyana,

led the bride to isigcawu, the symbolic meeting point where the couple would stand together, united. At this moment, both the Zulu and Indian families came together in song and dance, further emphasizing the joy and unity of the occasion.

A Collaborative Effort

The day's success was the result of a collaborative effort by many departments within VMH. The event was planned by a committee that included the Public Relations Officer, HR Department, Social Work, Maintenance, Nursing, Pharmacy, Patient Admin, Nursing College and Labour representatives. Each member played a crucial role in bringing the event to life. Throughout the hospital, employees donated funds and sponsors contributed to the success of the celebration.

Special roles were played by key individuals who brought the wedding play to life. The traditional izinduna zamabutho (Zulu warriors) Mr. Qhathabantu Majola from the Kitchen, Mr. Michael Mphangwa Mbeje from Maintenance, Mr. Mduduzi "Geja" Mkhwanazi from N Block (North wing), Mr. Mondli Phewa from the South wing, and Mr. Sifiso Skhakhane from the West wing, with Mr. Bheki Zondi coordinating their movements as abadidiyeli bamabutho. Their energetic presence and cultural representation gave the event a truly authentic Zulu touch.

Sacred and Gift-Giving Ceremonies

In a beautiful display of cultural exchange, a sacred ceremony followed the couple's union. The parents of both the bride and groom performed rituals

that symbolically bound the couple together as husband and wife. This sacred ceremony was central to both the Indian and Zulu traditions and although it was a symbolic play, the importance of these rituals was emphasized by both families.

Afterward, a gift-giving ceremony took place, where the couple's parents were presented with gifts. The couple themselves received gifts from Old Mutual, adding to the joyous occasion. The exchange of gifts symbolized the support and blessings from both families and the wider hospital community.

Narrators Guide the Guests

Throughout the wedding play, Miss Nontobeko Ndlela and Mr. Themba Khumalo from VMH served as narrators, guiding the audience through the various rituals and events. They skilfully explained what was happening, as well as what would typically take place in a real wedding ceremony. Their narration also highlighted steps that were missed or improvised due to the playful nature of the event. This helped guests understand the cultural significance of each moment and how the two cultures—Zulu and Indian—were being beautifully intertwined.

Prestigious Guests and Final Words

The event was graced by the presence of uMntwana uNhlanganiso Zulu, a Zulu prince and an employee of the Department of Health. His attendance added prestige to the day's celebration. In his speech, he commended VMH for their efforts in promoting cultural diversity and unity within the workplace. He shared words of

wisdom and encouragement, highlighting the importance of celebrating each other's differences and working together as a unified team.

Also in attendance were representatives from the Department of Health, Head Office, who praised the hospital for organizing such a memorable event.

To close the formal proceedings, Acting CEO Mr. Shezi delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to everyone involved in making the day a success. He gave special recognition to the planning committee for their dedication and hard work in organizing the event.

Cast of Characters

In this dramatic portrayal, Mrs. L. Pillay from Nursing (Inservice Training) played the bride/ Makoti, while Mr. Dlamini from Systems (Maintenance) starred as the groom,/UMkhwenyana. The bride was accompanied by her parents—Ms. Printher Govender from Paediatrics and Mr. K.P. Govender from CT Scan Department—who portrayed her mother and father. The groom's parents were played by Ms. Nomathemba Gudase from Paediatrics and Mr. Ngema from Systems Department. The iphoyisa (official witness) was performed by Mr. Skhakhane from Critical Care Unit.

A Culinary Experience

After the ceremony, guests were invited to the dining hall, where a culinary journey awaited them. In keeping with the theme of cultural unity, employees from different cultural backgrounds prepared traditional dishes, offering guests a chance to sample cuisine from various ethnic groups. From Zulu to Indian, Xhosa, and English dishes, the variety of food on display was a testament to the hospital's rich diversity.

A Day to Remember

The cultural wedding play at Victoria Mxenge Hospital was not only a celebration of love and unity but also a powerful reminder of the strength found in diversity. Days after the event, conversations are still buzzing through the hospital corridors, with many praising the event for its rich cultural displays, the sense of togetherness it fostered, and the memories that were made.

The Cultural Wedding Play was more than just a symbolic union of two individuals—it was a celebration of the union of different cultures, showing that when people come together, the result is something truly beautiful and unforgettable.

Lomcimbi ube nesasasa elikhulu futhi wakhombisa ubumbano nenjabulo kubo bonke abasebenzi base ukuthi uma kungaqhubeka ngaleligiya lokubambisana, kuningi okungenziwa ngempumelelo. Sibonga bonke abasebenzi basesibhedlela VMH ngokusukumela phezulu kwikhwelo lokuhlanganisa wonke umuntu kujatshulwe ndawonye; lomcimbi ubungeke ube kulelizinga lempumelelo ngaphandle kokuzinikela kwabo bonke abasebenzi base VMH.



PHOTO GALLERY

A GLIMPSE AT THE SPECTACULAR CULTURAL CELEBRATION AT VICTORIA MXENGE HOSPITAL



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