



Presentaion by Erick Mahemene  
Morningside Cottage

Members of the committee, ladies and Gentlemen

I, Erick Mahemene, General Manager of a 4 star Guest House situated in the constantia Valley precisely in Tokai, take this opportunity to come before you and give my say about what I think can be done in the empowerment of Black South African in the Tourism industry.

I have been in the industry since 2003, allow me to tell you that I am doing very well. Two years ago the owner wanted to sell the business because we had only +- 40% occupancy I asked her to give me another year because after 2 years of experience I could feel that we were going to get somewhere if we put more effort, I worked hard and at the moment our occupancy is +- 80%, we don't really have a low season anymore last winter we had +- 70% occupancy. I am in the process of starting my own Guest House. The banks are not easy to convince.

What do I think must be done in the Tourism sector for the empowerment of Black South Africans is firstly conscientise them, to let them know what this is all about and how they can become empowered. It is not only by giving a job or giving shares of a company to someone that you will empower that person. The person must know what he or she is going to do, I can give you the example of the DR Congo in the 70' and Zimbabwe as model of bad black economic empowerment system, just to name those two among others, we all know the results.

I think in the Tourism Industry specially in the hospitality sector a lot must be done to encourage us to open businesses in what was called in the sad past white area. Infact today most of Black B&Bs are located in the townships, everytime I meet a black who owns a B&B or a restaurant they are located in the townships, I am not saying that we must not have hospitality in the twonships but we must be everywhere.

An example: I met a gentleman who owns a restaurant in Khayelitsha at one of the tourism BEE Chater work shop and asked him to give me direction to his restaurant so that I could take my friends one day to have African food, then he asked me not to just go there, I must phone him first then I asked if he was that busy all the time, he said no but the restaurant is at a place where you don't just go, you must be expected.

I think the only way to empower this gentleman is to make the place where his restaurant is situated more safe so that people can just drive to his restaurant and have some nice African dish, because after he told me that, I just decided not to go because he was telling me in a way that the place is not very safe.

When I tell some of my brothers and sisters, black like me, that I am going to open my own Guest House in The Constantia Valley they ask me if the whites will come and stay and I tell them that I have been a kind of B&B owner for two years now and I have at the moment +- 50% of bookings are returning guest precisely business people.

I think the BEE must put the target high and help us not to be only partner or employer but to be a competen to the White owned companies specially in the hospitality sector.  
You will ask me how?

It is easy. Ask people to come with business plans, have a look at it, see what they need give them a loan with an insignificant interest rate, and have a structure to monitor them in case they can't achieve their goals.

There are many people who want really to do something in this sector but they don't have the means to do it and they don't know that they can be helped.

I think we must try to inform people about what is there for them, how it works and how it can work for them.

God Bless Africa

Thank you.