

REPORTS FROM THE MOLEPOLOLE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

BESSIEFEST '07 AN EXPERIENCE

It had been four years since I last went to Serowe. Believe me, it turned out to be an incredible experience, I do not regret the decision to take that long trip to the Bessie Head Festival.

The concert was banging, the music fantastic and the poetry session was a blast. I woke up very early that Sunday morning as I did not want to miss any of the events that were planned for the day, I was not disappointed as the events kept me on stitches wanting to know more about Bessie, her friends, her writings, her life and most of all about her son Howard.

Meeting different writers like Barolong Seboni, Tiro Sebina, Unity Dow and others and easily interacting with them made me feel like I am a very important person. The people of Serowe were very welcoming and they helped the organizers to make us feel at ease and to enjoy the event. The speech by Justice Dow was the best speech I heard in years, it made one to wonder how Bessie lived, how she managed to overcome all that came her way and still write breath taking books.

When I heard that Bessie had written more than two thousand letters, I knew that this woman was not afraid of putting her thoughts down whether she knew the person or not, she was just compelled to write. Panel discussions on some of Bessie's books shed light on the messages she was trying to put across and through her experiences she gave us her best works.

The organizers did a good job in preparing for the festival and this paid off as there was nothing boring about the events. Guys you really did a good job and keep it up! The hospitality was excellent and munching to traditional Tswana food made us keep in touch with our roots and giving the visitors a taste of what Botswana culture is about. The time spent in Serowe for the Bessie Head festival was the best; I felt refreshed and looking forward to reading one more book by Bessie. If you were not there you missed a festival of a century, the celebration of one of Africa's best writers and a chance to meet Botswana's best writers, next time be there and you won't regret. The festival made me forget all the troubles I had and when I look back, I will hold on to the memory of a life time.

The closing ceremony was heart breaking because one was letting go of the friends that were made, the laid back life of Serowe and most of all the end of the Bessie Head festival. I can not wait for another festival !

Tshepo Shoshong
M.C.E Writers Club
Molepolole
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Thula Modise
M.C.E Writer's Club

Wow! What a wonderful experience it was. A festival worth writing home about. The festival started and ended well. First we attended the concert. It was full of creativity as groups displayed their talents. The dances, music and poetry session were wonderful. Botswana has real talent!

The following day, the official opening, was graced by Justice Unity Dow. What a speech it was. It was full of vigour, vision and stimulating in that I felt rejuvenated. I felt I wanted to write more and more endlessly, during sunshine, rain, tornadoes. It revived that passion I have about literary works. I really admire her as a woman writer.

It would be a great mistake not to mention the discussions. They were interesting and informative. The right conducive environment was created in which everyone was given a chance to say out what they thought of the "once the little and suspiciously brownish baby girl" one of Botswana's greatest Writer of all time, Howard's mother Bessie Amelia Head. They even posed a question to us (M.C.E Writers' Club representatives) on what we think should be done to make literature more interesting to students. The Panelists gave everyone a platform to express themselves and respected the different inputs made about Bessie and her work.

We even saw the typewriter, the bed, her books and awards in which she possessed during her lifetime. It is really funny how much for granted people once took her and yet she was the reason why the many people gathered together, to celebrate the life that once was and the best works of Bessie.

There were also plays performed by Swaneng Hill School students and Enigma group. The plays depicted the life and works of Bessie Head excellently. They also were a testimony that Botswana is full of talent, whether already discovered or undiscovered. The one thing that needs to be done is unearth that raw talent through necessary means.

Different writers also graced the festival. It was really a great honour to talk to these great writers who we only knew by name. The Writers were friendly in that they allowed us to take pictures with them, gave us advices about writing skills and strategies in how to run the club. They were really happy to see upcoming young Batswana interested in the world of literature. They inspired us to write more every day, regardless of the situation.

Truly speaking, all the events were well organized. The organizers did a wonderful job especially that there were only few of them. They worked tirelessly to make the events worthwhile and they succeeded. I wish the Festival could be a yearly event. The only thing I would change is the number of days, more days should be added.

All three of the M.C.E Writers Club representatives came back with much energy. We could see our future in writing visibly before our eyes, our passion going a long way. We I could see myself, being able to successfully paint my picture with words. Those that did not go missed the incredible and unforgettable experience we had.

Rati Kutlapye
M.C.E Writer's Club

The Bessie Head Festival was full of events which were informative and motivating to us as aspiring writers.

I had an opportunity to be at the Official Opening which was done by Justice Unity Dow. I enjoyed her ability to capture our attention and paint a dear picture of Bessie's life. I also admired her confidence as a writer.

We also had an opportunity to interact and share ideas with different writers in the likes of Barolong Seboni, Tiro Sebina, Albert Malikongwa and Goodwill Tlokwe. It was a great honour to be among these writers who were interested in seeing us writing and going a long way. They imparted creative writing skills and strategies on how to run the club and we will make sure that we incorporate them in our club so it could be a sustainable literary body. As an aspiring writer, a teacher trainee, I look up to these writers who showed me that everything is possible. I have realized that I can also achieve my dream of being a successful writer.

My goodness, how great were the snap shots and the life of Bessie Head! These plays taught me more on the life of Bessie Head as a writer, a citizen of Botswana and as a mother. The actors were great and took time in preparing for the play. It was really touching to see Botswana being able to perform on stage especially that theatre is a new phenomenon in our country.

The Bessie Head Fest, showcased the fact that even though we have few writers in our country, we also have many potential writers out there. It was also evident that the market for book selling in Botswana is not only low because of the population but also that Botswana do not have a culture of reading literary works. It is important that, everybody takes part in trying to make Botswana read more and appreciate their own people's writings.

Oh! Did I mention that many people graced the occasion? It was unbelievable how people like literary work, people came as far as U.S.A, Japan while others were from Cape Town. This taught me a lesson that if people of different countries appreciate our literature, so we should be too and be proud of our own writers, whether dead or alive.

I really had a good time in Serowe, please let's do this frequently. It brought us back with so much energy, enthusiasm to write and taking time in studying our own literature. I came back from the Fest, a different, determined person. In life, it is important to attend such events which make a positive impact in your life and your future. I am really looking forward to another stimulating, educational Festival.