

HISTORY DAY CELEBRATIONS

REPORT by Mosa 'Muso

Introduction

Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) together with the Lesotho History Teachers Association (LHTA) celebrated the History Day on 13th April 2007 at the 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre with the participation of 23 high/secondary schools.

The issue of celebrating History was born out of weeding old library books and coming across old history books donated to the library by Mennonite Central Committee when they closed the office and left the country. The books were on Lesotho History e.g. Mr. B.M. Khaketla's Lesotho 1970 which was one of the books that had been out of print for ages and not available in bookstores anymore. This idea was sold to Lesotho History Teachers Association (LHTA) at a workshop in Teyateyaneng which was welcomed with a lot of anxiety.

Aim

The aim of the celebrations was to show the importance of history in our lives and try to influence the decision makers and other stakeholders to make history stay in the school curriculum.

The other reason was to advertise TRC, the library and its services among different school teachers and students.

Also to exhibit rare history books which were still available at TRC and Morija Museum.

Preparations

The Library and LHTA engaged in several meetings for organizing the event and also in identifying the activities which would mark this day.

First the schools that taught history were identified, secondly the three main denominations that first came to Lesotho during Moshoeshoe I's reign namely, the Lesotho Evangelical Church, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church were to present papers, thirdly the Speakers from Morija Museum, NUL and LCE, fourthly and lastly the schools who were allotted time to entertain the crowd of students and other participants with different Basotho historical activities e.g. plays, songs and dances.

TRC's Role

The TRC Library staff approached the Speakers e.g. from Morija Museum, the Catholic Church the LEC and Anglican Church and convinced them of the importance of celebrating the History Day and explained to them that:

- History gives a nation its identity

- History helps us understand change
- History helps understand people and societies

TRC also made it its responsibility to allocate presents to the students where the activity demanded so.

LHTA's Role

The role of LHTA was to approach the Ministry of Education, all the schools that were teaching history and other presenters especially from Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and the National University of Lesotho to participate in this event.

The History Day

The day began with the march which proceeded from TRC to 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre with the assistance from the Lesotho Police Services, though some schools preferred to wait at the Convention Centre.

The Ministry of Education heeded our call to participate by sending Mr. Makara from NCDC who made an opening speech focusing more on the importance of history as a subject in schools today.

All the churches sent their clergy to narrate to the students the coming of different churches into the country.

The Lesotho Evangelical Church sent Mr. T. Khoboko

The Catholic Church was represented by Fr. M. Sekoati

The Anglican Church sent Fr. P. Mphethi who is also a long time TRC member

Apart from the churches there was Mr. S. Gill who had prepared a paper on Lesotho (Pre-Independence) from Morija Museum.

Different papers were prepared also by LCE and NUL.

To mark the History Day, different schools had committed themselves to take part through Mokhibo, Lengae, Sesotho poems, song, Litolobonya, Mohobelo and Drama. All the activities were done so well that one could see the devotion from the students concerning the history of their country.

The teachers organized an impromptu speech for the students and there were presents for the three best were awarded presents that ranged from pens and dictionaries. The speakers also received each a TRC golf shirt.

All in all the day was a success with the Hall full to capacity with the students sitting along the passage.

Recommendations

- Both teachers and students recommended that the event be held annually with the assistance from TRC.

- The event should be extended to two days in order to allow more schools to participate with songs, dances and educational and motivational speeches.
- TRC should collaborate with LHTA to lobby schools through NCDC to continue teaching history as schools doing history are decreasing.

Lessons learned

- Time allocated to different cultural dances was not adequate taking into account the number of schools that participated
- Gifts to schools with TRC logo should be provided for some/other events organized by TRC to continue advertising its activities among different schools