

NHC supports Defence of SA Culture by Ngizwenkosi Mchunu

It is startling, in this day and age, almost to a point of annoyance, that South Africans still find deplorable ways to oppress each other in a seven year old democracy. The recent incident of Ngizwenkosi Mchunu, reported by the Sowetan on 14 July 2011, where he was embarrassed and degraded by security guards at King Shaka International Airport. These guards allegedly confiscated his traditional shield (Ihawu) and threatened to destroy it because it was "carrying foot-and- mouth disease".

Mchunu who was representing South Africa as a traditional ambassador at a function in the United Arab Emirates was dressed in his full Zulu attire when he boarded his plane. On his return, when he was returning to collect his shield which he had forgotten on the conveyor belt at the airport, he was confronted with this humiliation. Such ill treatment is not only displeasure to Mchunu but also a degradation of our African cultures. It is a slap in the face of what President Nelson Mandela said in 1996 that "we knew that our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our new nation". This kind of disrespect to our African cultures and traditions have even a greater power to destroy the strides that South Africa made in building a national pride that recognises the diversity. It would be regrettable that other nations appreciate our culture more than we do.

The National Heritage Council (NHC) condemns the defamation of culture and heritage. "We support the move by Mchunu to take further steps in fighting for our people's freedom of association and practice of any culture", says Sonwabile Mancotywa, the Chief Executive of the NHC.