

Ma' Mbeki to receive Lifetime Achievement Award at Top Women Awards Ceremony

While the call for nominations for the Top Women Awards is well underway and entries are mounting, *Top Women in Business & Government* (TWBG), in association with Topco Media, has invited Epainette Mbeki (Ma' Mbeki) to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award at the prestigious event to be held at the Sandton Convention Centre on September 4, 2008.

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At 92 years of age, Ma' Mbeki, who lives in the Eastern Cape near to the market town, Idutywa, has agreed to travel to Gauteng to receive the award and attend the gala event, at which some 400 prominent guests are expected. Managing Director of Topco Media, Ralf Fletcher, recently traveled up to the Eastern Cape to personally invite Ma' Mbeki to be the guest of honour at the Top Women Awards. "It was a humbling experience to meet a woman whose life has been so much part of South Africa's history and one spent working tirelessly with the rural communities," comments Fletcher. He was accompanied on the trip by Thobeka Zazi Ndadula of the recently launched book, *A Humble Journey on her Footprints*, as well as his young son, Ethan.

Mother of the 'struggle dynasty', as the Mbeki family is sometimes referred to, Ma' Mbeki's life of hard work and productivity reflects the values carried by the Mbeki family, of which she cites "independence" as most significant. "My whole family has it. It's this thing of being productive. You must not expect someone to do it for you; you must do it for yourself," she states. Topco Media considers Ma' Mbeki's stance she took in and after the struggle, and her lifelong commitment to the communities she works with, to be a beacon of inspiration to women seeking empowerment.

Today Ma' Mbeki oversees a sewing and beading group, Khanyisa Ntsinbi, which produces handcrafted traditional Xhosa costumes. The Top Women Awards gala evening will be staging a fashion show to present the Khanyisa Ntsinbi traditional Xhosa costumes made in the Eastern Cape, alongside modern fashions that carry similar cultural influences.

The hosts of the annual Top Women Awards claim that what makes the event a leader in its field is the fact that they are the only awards that publicly acknowledge and celebrate the contributions and achievements of people, companies and government departments who have changed the South African economic and political landscape through their commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

As an indication of the commitment to maintaining high standards, Tumi Makgabo, a passionate proponent of gender empowerment, has been appointed as Master of Ceremonies for the event. Recently returned to SA after her work as an anchor for CNN International, Makgabo, herself the recipient of many prestigious awards, and currently is a director on the board of the African Women's Development Fund.

Spectacular entertainment can be expected this year, as Lira steps on stage, with a voice and a face that vie for top honours in all things exquisite and beautiful.

Nominations for individuals, companies and institutions are expected to be received by no later than August 15. Submission information can be accessed through the TWBG website: www.businesswomen.co.za/www.topco.co.za, or by contacting Sue Gannon on either (+27) 21 791 7100 or at .

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