

# Stirring up a homecoming revolution

The Homecoming Revolution team and morrisjones&co recently returned from London where they held a successful expo on careers, property and business in South Africa. Held at the Olympia Conference Centre, over 45 South African companies attended in a bid to lure some much-needed skills home.



Left to right : Martine Schaffer, Prof Nick Binedell, Helen Zille, Angel Jones, Roelf Meyer

“Over a thousand South Africans attended the event, and they were of an extremely high skills caliber,” comments Angel Jones, founder of the Homecoming Revolution and executive creative director of morrisjones&co. “What is especially exciting is that four out of five of them are returning to SA in the next six months.

“A large amount of them have solid CVs and key experience that will get them the top jobs back home. Another trend we noticed was that a growing number of people were interested in starting their own business. This is very exciting, as the entrepreneurial opportunities in SA are huge, and we need people to come home and create jobs. Plus the majority are hungry for tangible actions to make South Africa safer - and we look forward to providing them with how they can get involved through the Action for a Safe SA initiative. The main reasons for returning continue to be lifestyle, family connections and a sense of belonging and obviously the global financial meltdown is a contributing factor too.”

Companies that attended included Allan Gray, Deloitte, Edcon, Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs, FNB, Foschini, Grinaker-LTA, Group Five, Hewlett-Packard, Nedbank Capital, Netcare, Sasol, Seeff and Investec. ISASA (Independent Schools' Association of Southern Africa) also attended with a number of private schools in Johannesburg.

A big theme of the event was how to Make a Difference at home, and charities included Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Nicro and the Tomorrow Trust.

## Top level speakers

Top level speakers at the event included Helen Zille (2008 World Mayor), Prof Barney Pityana of UNISA, Roelf Meyer, Francois Pienaar, Nick Binedell and comedian Trevor Noah.

Zille said that there were “lots of things to be optimistic about in SA”, moving the audience when she said, “Do you want to live quietly, or do you want to be part of the South African story, and live in a country where you can actually DO something?” Of much significance was her comment, “When the DA has 2/3rds majority, I wouldn't be voting for it, as I don't believe in too much power.”

Pityana talked about his own homecoming story: “In '92... unless I returned I could never speak about SA with any moral authority.” “We all have a moral responsibility to young South Africans, to give them hope” was his challenge to the audience.

Meyer platformed the Action for a Safe SA initiative, with plans to mobilise civil society with an implementation plan to be outlined on 29 October. “It's time for community-based leadership; it's time for civil society to bring about change,” he said. He laughed about being a proud ANC member, a constitutional commentator and an Afro-Saxon.

Binedell highlighted the entrepreneurial opportunities in SA and reminded everyone that the SA economy is largely resource-based. “We can be inspired by China and India and form part of the leadership of the New World,” he said. He congratulated South Africans on their resilience and commented on the accelerating rate of change in SA which is very exciting.

Pienaar stirred emotions on his own homecoming story and highlighted the power of sport in building a nation. Noah had the audience in stitches with his quips such as , “Why the hell do they call me a geyser over here?”

## Big hit

A big hit was reportedly the Design Indaba exhibition, which is a celebration of design in a country that has come to represent the triumph of the human spirit.

The event, held 4 - 5 October 2008, ran smoothly thanks to a number of volunteers, notably including Xolani Benson Xala, president of the South African Youth Forum.

• The Homecoming Revolution ([www.homecomingrevolution.co.za](http://www.homecomingrevolution.co.za)) is an independent non-political, non-profit organisation that encourages and helps South Africans around the world to return home. It runs a website for people returning to SA, including a six-month return-home checklist, an active blog, stories from homecomers, advice from people who have already made the move, and advice from experts on issues such as tax, immigration and careers. It also provides financial services - everything you need, from opening bank accounts before you move to SA, to information about home loans and car finance through FNB; careers - leading employers and recruitment agencies wishing to engage with skills abroad; personalised service - assistance for settling in with recommended suppliers; and networking - local events held in Joburg, Cape Town and Durban which allow homecomers to meet each other. The Homecoming Revolution is sponsored by FNB and was founded by advertising agency morrisjones&co, which provides the communication strategy and marketing material.