

Flame, friendship, and flavour: Nando's Mzansi champions embark on epic USA odyssey

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What if you could travel to a new country, meet new people, and taste new flavours? That's what Nando's Make the Table Bigger (MTTB) campaign offered to South Africans who wanted to expand their horizons, forge new connections, and revel in the joy of exploration. Launched on Freedom Day 2022, this campaign was inspired by the flame of democracy, the strength of our constitution, the unity of our people, and the spirit of togetherness that defines us.



Khwezi Madlala on the left with her cousin, Lily.

To join the campaign, Nando's Mzansi invited patrons to collect stamps from Nando's restaurants across the nation. These stamps were a passport to possibilities, unlocking the chance to win a grand prize: a captivating journey to the USA in July 2023. The USA was chosen as a symbolically poignant destination, as it shares a constitutional prelude with South Africa – “We, the people”.

Khwezi Madlala and Lerato T were the lucky winners of the MTTB campaign. Their odyssey of discovery took them to places they had never seen before, where they made lasting bonds with people they had never met before. The highlight of this adventure was the opportunity to enjoy Nando's in the USA, where the flame-grilled peri-peri experience had recently spread its wings in the heart of the American South, serving up South Africa's most fiery chicken in Texas.

They soon discovered that South Africans – as they always suspected – have resilient palates and an appetite for the bold. Across the Atlantic, a “mild” order meant a mere “plain” chicken, while the flame of “Hot” remained unchanged.

As Mandela Day approached, commemorated by South Africans dedicating 67 minutes to communal service, Nando's USA organised their tribute, the ‘Nando's Dash’. A benevolent exchange took place, with school supplies earning a reward of a quarter chicken and a single side. Amid this generous spirit, a poignant scene unfolded at a Nando's eatery in Washington

DC. A Nandoca was deeply touched by the presence of South Africans, resulting in a warm and heartfelt hug that brought tears to the eyes of the South African Nando's delegation, embodying an indelible bond.

An emotional voyage, as aptly expressed by MTTB champion Khwezi Madlala, was undertaken. "Untold shared history came to light during this journey, solidified by our visit to the African American Museum. Yet, it was the individuals we encountered who etched this trip in our hearts. The unity among Americans left us truly astounded."

Their first stop was Washington, D.C., where two museums told the stories of those who fought for equality and justice: The National Archives Museum and The African American History Museum. Coincidentally, the National Archives of South Africa are also located in the capital, Pretoria.

Khwezi shares, "The celebration of Mandela Day in the US underscores the enduring impact of his legacy. He gave people hope beyond South Africa and was a symbol of resilience and reconciliation."

Their wonder grew as they witnessed Mandela's global tribute in the heart of the USA. Momo, a Senegalese shop assistant, remarked, "Mandela was a tireless worker for Africa; we yearn for another like him."

They had fascinating encounters in Houston, Texas, a city brimming with diversity. The warmth of the people left an unforgettable mark. The journey unveiled captivating narratives, shared with them by countless individuals, each adding a new hue to their understanding of the world. As their journey concluded, Khwezi and Lerato brought home a profound realisation of the ties that unite humanity.

They also met Tony, a bar owner who managed to keep all his patrons happy by himself. He told them how he loved his job because he got to meet new people every day. He also mentioned that he served about 70 people alone in his bar every night.

Set forth – hamba uzobona. The world beckons.

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