

Reflection of the Eritrean UK Festival 2013

By Tsighe Andemariam

As an Eritrean living in London the Eritrean festival is an event that I attend and enjoy yearly. On completion of this year's festival at Lea Valley on July the 14th of 2013, I had left the event re-assured and very satisfied which is the reason for this article.

The festival was too big for me to give a full coverage report instead I am going to share with you my reflection on the parts I enjoyed the most and has made greater impact on me.

In general I have sensed a huge leap in the organisation, participation of different age groups including non Eritrean participants.

Normally it is very difficult for any family in the west to be able satisfy kids Diaspora family with cultural values. On the contrary during this festival, When I compare to all the Eritrean previous festivals in UK, this year kids are visibly seen appreciating and celebrating their Eritrean culture. It made feel very proud of My Eritrean Identity.

I thank God for allowing me to witness this event.



Opening Ceremony Festival UK 2013

People were working hard almost all unpaid, and you expect them to be tired but instead they were glowing with joy and love of the motherland Eritrea. There was clear demonstration of Love, unity and care to one another.

As if we have purposely have timed it, my family and I arrived at the same time as the VIP guests and senior officials from Eritrea. Hence I was able to share the warm reception. Young and old gathered to welcome them, made it more like an Eritrean wedding with music, smile, joy and people were dancing with green leaves on their hands as it is customary during Eritrean weddings.

The opening ceremony was held in the field with lots of tents of various sizes, rather like the way it is celebrated back in Eritrea. There were a range of singing and drama performances with the focus of the motherland and the Eritrean flag.



Mr. William Spring, Director CANAUK

A poem written by an Eritrean boy using a mixture of Tigrinya and English was very nice and inspirational to hear. Among the speech delivered by the non Eritreans including Dr Tim Williams who is an expert in Eritrea's mining, in his speech he gave complement to Eritreans and Eritrea's rock "...You have got the right people and rock...". Among the distinguished speaker one of them was William Spring on his speech speaking about Eritrea he said **"There is only one independent government in the Horn of Africa that has the vision and leadership quality...."** The Councilor Erkan Hurer from Enfield said "...Today I am Eritrean ..." during his speech. He also advised for Eritreans to participate in local politics including standing for election.



Councilor Erkan Hurer

During the Festival kids played freely and safely just like in Eritrea. Many (I heard about 32) football clubs took part including Birmingham Kowakebti, Erena, Asmara, Geez Rite and Red Sea FC. Supporters were much organised

celebration of the winners and tears of those who lost was part of the drama. Excellent footballing skills were displayed. Indeed it was very clear that some would grow to be professional football players.

Children's walking around the park with friends, chatting, smiling and enjoying the festival happily was something I have noticed on this year's festival. This will help greatly in enhancing the maintenance of the Eritrean culture. Bouncy castle and bouncy slides was also enjoyed by many kids. The Tekle Clown, Mama Mehret and Mahder his Little Mouse entertainment was appreciated by many kids and families.



A young child of about 12 years sang the popular but difficult song called "Hamadea Awetkum Riea" a song which gives credit to Eritrean Women association. During the Sibra (The closing part of the song) she completed the song with "...Tewelide Ane Ni-Adeye..." Which translates "...I am born for My Mother land..." She was given cheers and standing ovation by everyone in the hall. The competitive Contribution of the Various Eritrean Zobas and the women's association gave the Eritrea Festival in London a perspective as if it is inside Eritrean Territory. The numbers of volunteers working in all the zobas were a great deal, the weather was very hot, volunteers were working hard, and you expect them to be tired but instead they were glowing, a great demonstration of the Eritrean Spirit was displayed.



The food and drinks supplied by Eritrean businesses were amazingly cheap and high quality. More importantly the drinks were cold which was very important for the hot weather.



The seminar with H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Minister of Foreign Affairs and H.E. Tesfamichael Gerahetu was attended by almost all adults in the festival except those who were facilitating and supervising children activities. During the seminar detailed current updates was given clearly, various questions were asked and answered.



It was fully attended, engaged and successful seminar. Following the seminar the Union Tegadelti or Eritrean Veteran fighters who have taken their kids to the Nakfa fronts also gave a special gift to the senior officials. Finally the seminar session was concluded with a special song written for London festival from a children choir group called Hidri from Mother Tongue school called Geez Rite.



Their song concluded with “...AaSeY AaSeY AaSeY HadNet SeSiNu”; which loosely translates ‘we are so happy that Unity has flourished’. They received a standing ovation from the audience and the senior officials. In general the festival was full of fun activities, music, dancing, nice foods, lots of football and it was celebrated with the united Eritrean Spirit that can never be sanctioned.



For the record this years Eritrea UK festival 2013 is better organised and with greater participation which makes the responsibility and expectations for next year greater.

Thank you!

London UK – 20 July 2013