

ERITREANS IN THE BAY AREA HOST A MEMORABLE FESTIVAL

Foremost, millions of thanks to the many volunteers and organizers of the three-day Eritrean festival held in the cities of Oakland and Richmond, California, USA, beginning Friday, August 14, 2009 and ending Sunday, August 16, 2009. Together they had worked tirelessly and selflessly before and during the festival and now together they must embrace, celebrate, and relish their success. As the festival was indeed a success!

The day activities, which included sports and workshops, were held inside the premises of the Oakland Technical School, whereas the night cultural performances were conducted inside the marvelous Richmond's Civic Center. The school auditorium hosted, among others, a seminar by Eritrean Fisheries and Marine Resources Minister Saleh Meki, who spoke in details and with clarity about the current situation in Eritrea and addressed fully all questions posed to him by members of the audience.

The panel discussion on the challenges and prospects for peace in the horn of Africa, also held in the auditorium, featuring three professionals, namely Somali Professor Samatar, Eritrean researcher Dr. Awet Woldemichael and Ethiopian Review Editor Elias Kifle was quite informative and insightful. More of the same ought to be done in the future for the sake of promoting mutual understanding and good neighborliness.

There were well-attended workshops which pertained to the youth and women as well. The entertainment department was as ever glamorous and graced by the presence of the legendary Eritrean celebrity Bereket Mengisteab, veteran singer Bekita Ali as well as one of the younger emerging stars Tesfalem Arefaine, popularly known as Qorchach. Last and certainly not least, the Seattle-based EriAm Sisters, a trio, were a pleasant additional feature. It is to be recalled that the Sisters are competing in NBC's America's Got Talent Show. The mix of performers with extraordinary talents had made everyone in attendance deservedly happy.

The minors and adults' soccer games as well as the basketball ones were competitive. It appeared that the basketball games had attracted the same, if not more, number of spectators as the soccer games did. It was apparent to notice the enhancement in quality and variety of merchandise presented by the vendors, who came from near and afar. In all, the indomitable Eritrean spirit of camaraderie was evident throughout.

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