



## My #First Laughter Mob

Saturday 15 November 2014

### The journey...

This truly has been a series of miracles. Late in July I came across Vodacom #Firsts online and was immediately captivated by the opportunity. It is an incredible competition, run in a number of countries, where you pitch your idea about something you want to do for the first time... and the winner gets to see their first become a reality. As a Joy Activist and Laughter Coach, my pitch, in essence, was to organise 'My #First Laughter Mob' and see the city of Joburg transformed into JOYburg, the City of Joy. After selecting the Finalists, online voting was opened and the public voted for their favourite #First. After a fierce battle, I was declared the winner in South Africa, and my #First was set in motion by Vodacom.



### The team...

Vodafone in the UK managed the competition for all the countries, and a brilliant team was assigned to making my #First the best it could possibly be. Carly, my producer from RAW Productions, and directors, Ben and Dan from Tubby Brother, are London based, and all got to work. They inspired confidence in me, but the day I received their film treatment, I knew my vision and heart were in great hands.

They contracted a world class production house in SA, TimeFrame TV, and in just two weeks, Jasmyn ensured the success of my #First. No expense was spared to ensure that this was a day that would resound in history. The next phase of my prize will be a documentary which will stand witness for all the world to see... JOYburg as the 'City of Joy'!

### The history...

There is often adverse publicity about Johannesburg and many people have negative perceptions about the city, and recently it was named the unfriendliest city in the world! A few years ago I began to call it 'JOYburg' – declaring it the City of Joy. A friend and I registered the trademark, as well as that of 'Calling out the Gold'. Joburg was built on gold and, some might say, greed and exploitation. The vision for JOYburg is a city transformed as we develop a culture of 'calling out the gold' in the beautiful people and the city. It took three years for the trademarks to be registered, JOYburg in May and 'Calling out the Gold' on Monday 10 November, the day the team flew out from the UK to JOYburg!



More significance, after we chose our wonderful venue for my #First, The Sheds @ 1Fox Street, we discovered that it was here that Hubert Davies opened mining warehouses in 1893 and where Joburg's first miners pitched their tents during the gold rush. It was perfect to start another gold rush from this noteworthy location.

### **The build-up...**

The team hit the road running, with visits to a number of locations in the city. Cameras followed me in the township of Diepsloot as I did a laughter session with wonderful Gogos (grandmothers), laughed with Kids with Rhythm (a drumming group), and wandered through the streets telling people about JOYburg and my #First. The next day we targeted the streets of the city, handing out JOYburg Manifestos and building interest. There was a visit to Kaya FM, an interview with Supt Edna Mamponyane, spokesperson for the JMPD and others – friends and colleagues, and the crew filmed a Dynamic Living session with staff at the Constitutional Court of SA.



### **The planning...**

Virtually all the planning for my #First was done through mobile technology. Apart from the long distance planning, my laughter team was brought together through the internet and communication was through emails and text messaging. There was one meeting with laughter leaders and video clips were filmed and sent to all participants. Only on the day would we discover how successful we had been in planning a mob that way.

### **The JOYburg Revolution begins...**

Saturday 15 November marked a new beginning for the city of JOYburg. The excitement was palpable as the laughter team began to arrive in the morning. Many were dressed in gold, and young and old had their faces painted as the crew finalised their set

up. At 'go-time' I stood up on a table and began to laugh... and my 150 joy bringers stood and joined me as we released the sound of joy and laughter over the city.



After short speeches it was time for the golden Joy Procession through the streets of JOYburg. A brass band led the way, together with dancers and drummers... and the marchers waved gold JOYburg flags and streamers. Placards with positive messages were carried... and 'I LOVE JOYburg' banners were proudly displayed. JOYburg Manifestos and gold balloons were handed out to the watching public and many of them joined the procession. It was a joyful time of song and dance, and many lives were touched.

One of the participants, Ingrid Pepler, had this to say, "I saw so many faces light up as the mob of laughing, smiling super stars reached out and touched their hearts. I saw frowns vanish and smiles appear. I saw people reaching out and loving everybody in sight. I agree, this is undeniably the start of a revolution that will make JOYburg a beacon of light to the rest of the world - or maybe even the rest of the universe!"





The miracles continued on Saturday. Having watched the weather for 10 days, I was not surprised when the clouds built up, the wind blew and the rain began to pour on Saturday morning! However, I was convinced that it would all be fine. A song rang in my head... "I'll march my band out, I'll beat my drum... don't bring around a cloud to rain on my parade!" (finding out later it was from the film, 'Funny Girl'!) As we drove to 1Fox, the city was shrouded in dark clouds and rain... but as we got closer, the rain subsided and had stopped completely when we parked. The day was absolutely perfect, and then later the clouds built up again... and as I got into my car at 4pm to leave, the rain began – and simply poured down. Less than an hour later, there was a beautiful double rainbow over the city! A sign of promise! Perfect!



station, care giving and other stressed groups. Ultimately, as they invest in the well-being of their staff, through this transformational programme, I plan to reward organisations with the 'JOYburg stamp of approval'.

### The future...

Thanks to Vodacom, JOYburg has been launched in spectacular fashion, but it is a long-term vision and initiative, so this is just the beginning. I want to get the JOYburg Manifesto into everyone's hands, for people to affectionately call the city JOYburg, and for it to be world renowned as a great City of Joy. Transformation begins within, and I am continuing my work, introducing people to the transforming power of joy and laughter through my Dynamic Living Programme. Stress is the No 1 killer in the world and laughter is the greatest weapon we have against this enemy. I am determined to extend the reach of the programme, at the same time introducing JOYburg, within many more corporates, government departments, churches and various other groups. My aim is also to build partnerships to run workshops in every school, hospital, police



### The gratitude...

There really are no words to fully express my thanks to Vodacom and Vodafone for this amazing #Firsts competition, and to the incredible production team. I am beyond grateful... THANK YOU! I also want to thank all who participated, supported, voted, prayed for, and loved me through this adventure. My prize is for each of you... and for all the people of our beautiful city. I have already had a really great life, but this was probably the best week – and best day in my life. **The #JOYburg Revolution has truly begun!**

You can play your part by adding your voice and calling the city JOYburg – and remembering to hashtag #JOYburg in all your social media. For more information about the programme or partnering with JOYburg, or to book a workshop for your organisation, please fill in the contact form via [www.joyburg.co.za](http://www.joyburg.co.za).