

World Economic Forum Summit at Namibia

Namibia Arrival

The Namibian

International superstar Michael Jackson arrived to a rapturous welcome in Windhoek yesterday as hundreds of people flocked to the airport to greet their idol, while thousands of others thronged the city centre to catch a glimpse of the singing legend. Namibia experienced its first glimpse of pop hysteria as crowds screaming out "Michael, Michael" and "Michael we love you" mobbed the star wherever he went. From the airport to the city centre to Katutura for many it was a dream come true. Some wept, some swooned, others could just not believe their eyes.

They came on crutches, young and old - toddlers, trendily-dressed youngsters, the middle-aged and the elderly; fans and celebrity-gawkers; from Pionierspark, Klein Windhoek, Katutura and Khomasdal; some climbed trees, others lamp posts for this once in a lifetime chance to see the King of Pop. According to unconfirmed reports, one woman at the airport was so overcome by the moment that she started stripping off her clothes; and, according to another, Finance Minister Nangolo Mbumba was knocked over by the perpetually surging crowd. It was an outpouring of emotion and fan frenzy not witnessed before in the Namibian capital.

A sign of things to come was first witnessed at Hosea Kutako International Airport, where Prime Minister Hage Geingob and a number of other Ministers and top Government officials were also on hand to welcome the King of Pop. Chaos reigned as ecstatic fans ignored flimsy security arrangements to surge on to the tarmac close to where Jackson's plane had landed. When the superstar, sporting his trademark dark glasses and a black hat, finally disembarked from the plane, the crowd kept pressing forward and could not be restrained by human chains formed by the Police to keep them at bay. Some fans held aloft placards welcoming Jackson, some of which stated "We Love You Michael"; others brandished posters - torn from magazines or lovingly made personal drawings and montages of their hero. T-shirts with pictures of Jackson and which proclaimed "The King Of Pop" were also in evidence. Touchingly, prior to the touchdown a couple of young street children who managed to make it to the airport were pictured straightening out each other's clothing. As Jackson emerged into the bright Namibian sunlight, his bodyguards and other security officials formed a tight security circle around the star, with the security detail unfurling three umbrellas to shield him from the sun. Immediately after a bouquet of flowers was presented to Jackson, the crowd all but went out of control as they tried to get a closer look as the Police struggled to keep the shoving, surging mass of people back.

It was a smile and a wave, and then Jackson was bundled into a metallic grey Chevrolet as hundreds of fans chased his vehicle across the runway before his cavalcade finally left the airport compound. A few hours after jetting into Windhoek, Jackson went to State House for an audience with President Sam Nujoma, before having a light lunch with the head of state. Meanwhile, the crowds had gathered in Independence Avenue which had been abuzz since early morning as people gathered to await the arrival of Jackson, initially scheduled for 11h00. Although the appearance of the star was delayed by two hours and 40 minutes, people remained good-natured and bantered among each other, although each time there was even a

hint that Jackson might appear screams erupted and people stormed the street. Traffic vehicles which made sporadic forays down the streets were greeted with cheers, although the crowds were more wary of security officials on foot with sniffer dogs, and a group of youngsters positioned on a balcony kept up the chant of "We Want Michael".

A few took the chance to show off their dancing skills as they imitated Jackson's trademark dancing. "He should do his moon dance on the meteorites in Post Street Mall," suggested one imaginative Windhoeker. When the King of Pop finally made his entrance at the head of Independence Avenue on the back of an open black Land Rover 110, it was pure populist frenzy as emotions spilled over and people thrust forward. Jackson appeared to be swept down the street on the shoulders of the crowd which by this time had taken on a life of its own, as people tried to mob his cavalcade. After Jackson's Post Street Mall walkabout was cancelled because of security fears, it came as something of a surprise when Jackson descended from the Land Rover opposite a popular city restaurant about half-way down Independence Avenue and braved a brief walkabout, sparking even greater frenzy. One fan managed to dart through the crowd, sneak past the bodyguards and get up close and personal to hug the superstar.

After getting back on his vehicle, Jackson threw a number of bouquets to people and also picked up a child from the crowd for a personal greeting. As the cavalcade hit the end of Independence Avenue and prepared for its journey to the Soweto market in Katutura, the crowd continued its journey alongside and behind the superstar, following their Pied Piper. Stragglers in the city centre were still assimilating the occasion. Jackson might have left the immediate vicinity, but the aura of excitement remained.

"My daughter wants to go to America with Michael," a father with the three-year toddler on his shoulders told The Namibian. Said a young professional: *"I don't know why I came today. I'm going to meet him at the Prime Minister's reception tomorrow. But something drove me here. I just had to see him before then."* Another young man appeared to be both bemused and excited. *"All this, just for another human being, although he's a star,"* exclaimed Benny Jacobs. *"What do you think would happen if Jesus Christ came?"* he asked. Similar scenes of mass excitement gripped Katutura, where thousands more fans had turned out. Jackson could not enter the Soweto market as planned because of the massive sea of fans which had congregated there, blocking the entrance.

Reuters

"The crowd had been allowed onto the tarmac adjacent to the runway to wait behind a plastic cordon for Jackson, but the crowd broke through the cordon after Michael had been presented with a bunch of flowers. They prevented him from walking into the airport terminal. Security personnel had to bring a car onto the runway, which at first was prevented from moving by the crowd's frenzied efforts to catch a glimpse of the entertainer, before it finally whisked him away to a hotel in the capital."

World Economic Forum Summit

The Namibian

Visiting American pop star Michael Jackson challenged delegates to the World Economic Forum's Southern Africa Economic Summit yesterday to address the plight of children. Speaking at the summit's opening yesterday in Windhoek Jackson said that since world leaders had committed themselves to ensuring the Rights of the Child in 1990 the plight of children had in fact grown worse. He said that the physical abuse of children continued unabated with no action forthcoming from world leaders. There were over 100 million homeless children in the world with millions others dying of malnutrition and neglect, Jackson reminded delegates.

"How are you as leaders prepared to address the plight of children in the context of global competitiveness in the 21st Century? There must be global resolve that the 21st Century will bring about change," Jackson told delegates to the eighth Southern African Economic Summit.

Jackson said as a result he and his new American business partner Don Barden, of Barden International, had decided that they were *"going to put their money where their mouths are"*. *"We will be looking at investments in the world which will bring benefits to the children"*, he added.

Johannesburg Star

Michael Jackson addressed the plenary session of the African Economic Summit held in Namibia on Sunday, with a plea on behalf of the world's children, whose plight he described as the single most important issue of the 21st Century. *"We are behaving like people without compassion and love for the most vulnerable section of society. The children of the universe are without a spokesperson, they're voiceless"*, he said. Michael told his host at the summit, Namibian President Sam Nujoma that the plight of the world's children had worsened since Namibia, along with many other countries with representatives present, had signed the convention of the right of the child in 1990. *"We are all touched by the atrocities committed against children: sexual, physical abuse, child slave labor, educational neglect. We feel ashamed. Angry. Appalled. But there is no action. No action."*

He called for the total eradication of the suffering of children, to be pursued by the same enthusiasm by countries as issues of economic development and world trade. Michael added there were more than 100 million homeless children globally. *"How are you as leaders planning to address these issues in the context of global economic development"*, he asked participants at the summit, drawing together several African heads of state and business leaders from 60 countries. He said he and his partner, US businessman Don Barren, planned to put *"our money where our mouth is"*. *"We will be looking at global investments for the economic empowerment of people that will ultimately benefit and enrich the lives of children and we will be calling on the leaders that are here today to assist and support this important initiative"*.