

## **African wedding for an African bride**

Did you hear how hectic Zandi's wedding was? Says Dikeledi, commanding the attention of all the ladies in the office. Intimate garden service and reception at the exclusive Ndwandwe lodge. At this point the ladies euphoric with envy scoffing every word of this wedding commentary. Her dress.....champagne coloured halter neck dress with hand woven embroidery meshed with Moroccan beads. No work could possibly be done at this point some have their hands covered over the mouths in shock of the richness of this frock. All round google searches of this wedding ensued. Mayhem strikes emails frantically exchanged with pictures of this African Cinderella betrothal. Dikeledi now says Thandi you should print these out, there are some great ideas you could mimic cheaply for your wedding. The others concur vehemently the thought hadn't occurred to me. Then came the final blow yes Thandi perhaps there can still be a romantic aspect to your nuptials yet.

I later think to myself me "why?" this is not the wedding I Thandekile Sithole had dreamt of. The day I would leave my family and be embraced by ancestors of another, the sound track to my wedding would be the "umakoti ngo wethu" ,with dance and ululation plenty. Nxa .... "Romantic aspect" upon reflection I found myself flabbergasted how Dikeledi Setai could actually utter those words. Yes I didn't have some soppy soapy like story of my engagement. My story was romantic because it is one my mother knew before it happened to me and my grandmother had told to all four of her daughters before they came of marrying age.

Bongani and I had seriously discussed us taking the next step but I understood he was still saving up for lobola. It came as a surprise to me when Mama called to say a letter from his family had arrived and a date for the negotiations was requested. Baba responded to the letter after a week and preparations began. That was the beginning of my engagement. The weeks went by and the day

By Ntombenhle Buthelezi [www.enhleb.wordpress.com](http://www.enhleb.wordpress.com) , @Enhle\_uhuru

came closer excitement brewing in me like fermenting umqoboti in 20 litre brewing pot.

Stories of Zulu fathers levying a hefty dowry had both mama and I worried. Bongani's uncles arrived promptly at the agreed upon time but we didn't open when they rung the door bell. They began to praise our family and proclaimed the gifts they had brought as vula Molomo –Opening of mouth. Thirty minutes later they were allowed in and proceedings began. My female cousins and I were called into the lounge we sat on the floor and the Dlangamandla uncles were told to point out which maiden from the Sithole kraal they had come to ask for. The negotiations took three long grueling hours. Every chance I got I was chatting to Bongani on my cell updating him on what was going on. Mama reprimanded me several times for that but I couldn't resist .I couldn't wait to see him because the next time I saw him he would be my fiancé. I was getting married how surreal I loved every moment of it. That day mama laid a gaze upon me I had never seen in her eyes before, that day she looked at me and saw a woman. That particular moment was humbling yet frightening all in the same breathe. This was the perfect proposal for a Zulu maiden and I wouldn't change a single thing about it.

We began to plan our big days there will be a ceremony at my parents home and at Bongani's parents when I would be taken there by my family to stay as a new makoti (daughter in law) of their family. I would have two celestial gowns that would embrace our culture and revere our beautiful ancestors without whom, Bongani and I would not be. One of the dresses I would get to pick and the other second attire chosen by my new in-laws.

Preparations still prove to be cumbersome for the sublime African extravaganza my future husband and feel is befitting Zulu royalty as we call ourselves, on a modest budget though that is. Praying for perfect weather, finding the perfect Isicholo (traditional Zulu hat) designing my dress and finding traditional Zulu dancers and praise singers. Setting up appointments with extended family to

make sure everyone wears the correct attire the list goes on. I am simply elated that my ancestors have blessed me with a partner who loves and respects his ancestors. Who clearly sees the beauty of our tradition and culture the sheer essence of our being as an African couple. I simply can't wait to be this Zulu man's bride, the thought of which alone already heightens the extent of my joy to places my mind had not yet considered. So to each his own for me an African wedding is my definition of a fairytale because modern as I may be I am an African bride.