

An Indaba dabba doo

 By [Anice Hassim](#)

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Ah Cape Town, the land of scrambled not fried (never fried!) eggs and pizza toppings that cannot be substituted (never mind you don't eat bacon) lest the chef be offended enough to emerge from the kitchen with indignant sweat pouring down his face and the chopping knife waving menacingly (true story).

I am in town with some of the immedia team to soak up the stimulation from [Design Indaba](#) 2016. At [\[http://www.immedia.co.za/immedia\]](http://www.immedia.co.za/immedia), we have a multi-disciplinary practice and design sits at the centre of it.

We have been to many conferences, but this is our very first [Design Indaba](#). So, yes, there is an awful lot about this world that I do NOT know and my opinions and impressions may be completely, totally dead wrong. In fact, they're probably all wrong, but I am hoping it's funny and gives anyone reading a sense of how a DI virgin experienced it.



Registering in the morning was quick and simple but came with a twist. I needed to scan my thumbprint to register. Hello, I didn't know I was applying for a visa, I thought I was attending a conference. Perhaps there was privacy policy, a specific need other than access (what was the delegate badge for?), a sensitivity to explaining how this data (what data) is stored and used in future... But it was simply "the process".

I objected and asked to opt out. At this point a couple of other people in the registration queue were now also curious about this biometric requirement, but one of the DI team cheerfully accepted my objection and indicated that they would be happy to register me alternatively. Well-handled and I went along to another station, verified my identity and received a smart tag which worked just like my fingerprint.

They also tried to reassure me that "no private or identifying data is stored about me." Sadly, I also live in the tech world, where we know the reality of some of these issues all too keenly. The boundaries of acceptable privacy and data management are the single most important debates before us today. This was the same morning that Apple declined to submit to the American State's request that they create a back door to the encryption that keeps our private lives private. This is a concern I recently blogged about on [Bizcommunity](#). It felt creepy. But well done to team for allowing me to proceed with registration and the whole thing was done in minutes.

But now, on to the show!

As someone who is familiar enough with the industry and with convergence pushing us all together, my outsider/insider view may offer some thoughts that may prove useful to the community so let's get into it.

First up was a cute couple who shared their year-long sabbatical from life to push themselves out of their comfort zone by experiencing new interesting cultures and things, while providing work in exchange for life's essentials.

They were inspired by a talk at DI2014 and their presentation this year, was creative and interesting but I wasn't sure how this translated to reality as most of us experience it. I sat worrying about the message this sends out to young people who don't live in this couple's reality and who might be tempted to try it. I worry that some guy is going to give up his job to also go and clean dog sh*t off the stoep and peeps are going to be like, "isn't that what you should be doing anyway?"

Twenty-two years after liberation & this does not feel like Africa

My next sense of something out of place and time relates to the fact that looking around, I haven't seen so many white people in one place since I went to the Mumford and Sons concert a couple of weeks ago (or a march for #ZumaMustFall).

Through the day, the opinions were all white, the entertainment black. My young immedia designer is seeing only white people being declarative and authoritative. For example, the Nando's team comes up on stage to present the Young Designer of the Year award and yep, all white. There can be "only one Young Designer of the Year", but in the end, Nando's chickened out and chose two, one white and one black. By now the sceptic in me, (who generally doesn't need any prodding to emerge), is thinking wtf?

Smack bang at mid-morning nap time, we had a drama presentation which whilst professional and filled with in-humour for an agency crowd, had more than a few nodding off for a quick 10-minute snooze. This production was meant to highlight some key thoughts that were actually explored in the presentation afterwards. The latter was way more interesting and engaging and I would have wanted more time from those presenters, than the play.

The real excitement and energy came from the youth team - wow, now we are cracking! An incredibly inspiring industrial designer from Ghana demonstrated a connection with design and people's lives that had the audience hungry for more, but since these guys were all the undercard, we saw too little of them. Rich Mnisi also rocked the house and deserved more time to express his thoughts.



Rich Misi Fashion

Thomas Chapman from Local Studio had the crowd rapt with his history lesson on the effect that apartheid had on our communities and how design can bridge the divides physical and human that it created.

From the heart and from the horn

He had the big finish before lunch by introducing music legend Hugh Masekela, who provided perhaps the most gripping session of the morning - he spoke from the heart and from the horn about how much is being forgotten of the circumstances of apartheid and the heroes who stood firm against injustice.

For many young people in the crowd, this may have been their first hearing of these stories and for this alone, it made the day worth it. Hugh was not being authoritative about design ("I am no designer, although I have been designed" - paying tribute to Father Trevor Huddleston and others who shaped him), so I am going to put him in the entertainment camp, as powerful and stirring as his message was.

His voice is now as important as his music and he was happy to use both, closing on a lament to the ancestors to bring back fairness and justice and equity to the world and put an end to the corruption and greed that destroys our futures.

So far, I am getting the dabba doo that I came to Design Indaba for - my brain is racing with a million poorly expressed thoughts that I want to dive into and wrestle in the mud with. Judging from the chatter around the breakfast table this morning, the rest of the team are experiencing exactly the same thing.

We're off to a good start!

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ABOUT ANICE HASSIM

Anice Hassim is the CEO, Founder and majority shareholder of the immedia ecosystem. He is a speaker and educator around digital trends, strategy and marketing, and helps brands better understand and negotiate the digital space. Contact Anice on tel +27 (0)31 566 8000, email him at anice@immedia.co.za and follow him on Twitter at [@anicehassim](https://twitter.com/anicehassim).

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