

Fostering social change through circus arts

 By Sindy Peters 11 Aug 2016

Laurence Estève and Brent van Rensburg have been at the helm of one of the first social circus schools in the world for the past 24 years. Cape Town's [Zip Zap Circus School](#) has over the last financial year trained over 1,000 children, many from disadvantaged areas, all at no cost.

We interviewed Estève, CEO and co-founder of Zip Zap, to find out what keeps the circus school running, how South Africa can help support the organisation, and what her message is for Women's Month 2016.



Laurence Estève

Who is Laurence Estève, and what is your role as CEO of ZipZap Circus School?

I am a dreamer and a facilitator bringing a new tool (the circus arts) into the hands of our youth to bring fun, hope, skills, social cohesion, entertainment, education and employment.

My role at Zip Zap has changed throughout the years and is now more a guidance and support role than hands-on (except for finances) – but I still wash all the costumes after every show!

24 years is a long time, what has made Zip Zap so sustainable?

Circus people are strong and resilient. We live by a 'No Play No Pay' motto. What made Zip Zap survive 24 years is that we never, never ever give up. We bend, adapt, squeeze and push through – with the help of many friends along the way.

Rather than just a source of entertainment, Zip Zap has a social purpose. What made you and your partner/husband go this route?

Brent's life revolves around the chance he took leaving the country to perform in Europe in 1977. With no school degree he speaks six languages. He rigged the highest flying trapeze in the world and impossible floating high wire. He wanted to give back and offer opportunities the same way he had.

I was raised in a culture of volunteering at home, at school, in my home town, at my gym club. I started teaching the younger ones and then studied Sciences and Technology of Physical & Sports Activities.

It makes us both happy to help kids and contribute to the building of our nation with our own two cents. If everyone put in two cents, the world would be a better place.

▄ ***What are some of the challenges in keeping Zip Zap afloat, and how can the public and corporate sector help?***

Our biggest challenge is financial resources. We started with an idea and a passion and now have to provide for 17 staff, eight programmes, four vehicles, three trailers, tons of equipment, and 1,400 beneficiaries. It's bigger than what we can handle alone, but because we always make a plan to deliver our services and keep everyone happy, the public doesn't know that we are struggling financially.

The public and corporate sector can help by making donations that are tax deductible because we are a registered public benefit organisation and a Section 18A. We are also a level 1 BBBEE organisation and using our services provides score card points.

Finally, we have an impeccable track record and would make a naming rights sponsor really proud and happy.



▄ ***Is there any female figure that has had a positive influence on your life? If yes, who and how?***

All the women I have come across who work, raise their children, support their husbands, and take care of their friends, houses and themselves, and are still smiling, are role models to me.

▄ ***Do you think, in 2016, it's important having a month dedicated to women in South Africa?***

Of course. Women are the backbone of all societies and are still taken for granted and abused in so many ways. When the abuse stops, then the month dedicated to women can stop.

▄ ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

Take care of yourself first, it will make you stronger to look after others.

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