

Celebrity deaths



By [Siphosethu Stuurman](#)

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It's hard to believe that we have not yet completed the first quarter of 2012, yet the year does not feel so new anymore. A lot of eye-popping, thought-provoking and arousing events have taken place already. Certainly the expulsion from the ANC of the soon to be irrelevant, self-appointed Gucci brand ambassador Julius Malema has been a red hot subject of gossip and debate in the country. And let's not forget Freedom Front Plus leader Pieter Mulder, who literally pissed off a lot of people with his sloppy uttering's on the ever-so-sensitive land issue.

Death of Whitney



Whitney Houston

But perhaps, so far, the biggest news locally and globally was the unexpected death of pop titan Whitney Houston, who died on 11 February (the day before the Grammys).

By the way, this is not a fashionable late Whitney tribute, lots of great things have been rightfully said about her and so I won't be rehashing them.

However, what I do find interesting is the systematic public reaction to the unexpected death of a famous person.

Firstly we have the well-wishers who change their Facebook and BBM profile pictures to that of the dead celebrity. This gang of well-wishers are generally saddened by the passing of their favourite celebrity and will probably be the first to join and follow Facebook and Twitter tribute accounts.

Death hijackers



Mshoza

Then you have the "death hijackers", usually it's a small, footnote celebrity trying to get a bit of rare publicity. Perhaps you will remember former kwaito star, now queen of skin bleaching flop, Mshoza, who made claims that the late Lebo Mathosa had "introduced" her to lesbianism and smoking weed. She made these comments while the nation was still grieving the death of its favourite drama queen. Luckily, Mshoza only managed to get a well-deserved tongue-lashing from a number of other grieving local musos and fans.

Possibly in another case of "death hijacking", we also bear witness to the re-emergence of old rumours. You see when a famous person dies every rumour ever told about him will rise from the grave and come to life as a fact! There have always been question marks about Whitney's sexuality, but even before her corpse could reach the funeral parlour, respected gay activist Peter Tatchell (Google him) "outed" Whitney by making claims that she was happiest in a lesbian relationship. Whether this is true or not, I could not be bothered, but Tatchell's timing to "disclose" Whitney's sexuality has raised a few eyebrows.

The haters

And, lastly, you have the haters gang championed by 5fm's Gareth Cliff. This group chooses to remember the dead through a limited view of the person's turbulent times. Artists like Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, and our very own queen of pop Brenda Fassie, were indeed troubled souls with imprisoning drug addictions.

But, for goodness sake, did these guys provide us with a lifetime of great memories or what? Think of how many times we've danced to Brenda Fassie's weekend special or dismally failed to moonwalk like Michael Jackson did? In my youthful



Gareth Cliff

eyes these are far more lasting images of the dead that I'd like to keep. So I'll forever ever remember the likes of Whitney Houston, Brenda Fassie and Michael Jackson for their incredible talents and unrivalled abilities to keep fans entertained.

ABOUT SIPHOSETHU STUURMAN

Siphosethu Stuurman studied towards a Bachelor of Journalism (Honours-level degree) at Rhodes University, specialising in Radio & TV broadcasting and also majored in Industrial Sociology.

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