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A SIP OF WINE CONNECTS 2 CONTINENTS AND STARTS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

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PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HERITAGE LINK BRANDS



Ideas can come from the least expected places and one should keep an eye open for those moments. They can be fleeting. If you are not paying attention, the doors to success can close as quickly as it opens. But, if you are paying attention and take action, doors to success can open wide. The question becomes in that moment “Will you walk thru the door or not?” Take for example this real life success story that began in 2005 with a sip of rosé wine...

While in South Africa at the first Soweto Wine Festival, Selena Cuffe of West Chester (OH) took a sip of rosé wine produced by a black South African wine maker. Cuffe loved the taste and asked how she could get the wine upon her return to the States. She had no idea that blacks were less than 3% of the country’s winemakers. She was told distributing the wine in South Africa was challenging let alone selling in the States. Getting a foothold in the States wasn’t even on the radar screen ... unthinkable. Wrong answer or was it?

Fast forward to today. That sip of wine led to the start of a growing business – Heritage Link Brands, LLC, a brand management company which showcases the very best of Africa and its people, ultimately changing people’s perception of Africa and its Diaspora.

Heritage Link Brands currently offers a selection of wines, several pictured above, from Seven Sisters, M’hudi and One World Vineyards to U.S. wine lovers.

The company, which will feature other products focused on black economic empowerment (that’s a legal term in South Africa), currently offers wines making Heritage Link Brands one of few African American owned wine import and distributor businesses.

From that sip of wine and embracing a need to make the world a better place and how black people are perceived, Heritage Link Brands, LLC, founded by Selena Cuffe, President and CEO, and her husband Khary Cuffe, Chief Financial Officer, was born. On a leap of faith combined with business acumen and determination, Cuffe quit her six figure Assistant Brand Manager/marketing job at Procter & Gamble to embark on a journey in the \$3 billion South African wine industry. “Change shouldn’t be feared...Embrace change.” said Selena Cuffe while speaking at a Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber Profiles of Success business and networking event.

The Cuffe’s embracing change led to Heritage Link Brands being “the preeminent importer and dis-

tributor of African wines”. The company made history in 2007 when it launched with the debut of black-produced African wines in select Whole Foods grocery stores in the United States. The company, headquartered in Los Angeles, showcases black wine producers who are underrepresented within the wine industry and their compelling real life stories.

And as they say, the rest is history... as well as history in the making!

Today, Heritage Link Brands, a 21st century company utilizing technology and streamline operations to run an efficient business, is going strong, growing, forging new ground, giving hope and building futures in Africa, while linking U.S. wine consumers to Africa and its black-produced African wines. Americans are particularly drawn to the compelling real life stories of the winemakers and their homeland. The company has built up an active fan base online using social media, where customers can connect to each other and learn the latest news about the wines, winemakers and special events and contests.

Heritage Link Brands, the largest

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A SIP OF WINE CONNECTS 2 CONTINENTS (CONT'D)



Pictured in the middle: Selena Cuffe, President and CEO of Heritage Link Brands, with Diale and Malmsey Rangaka at M'hudi Vineyards in South Africa. The Rangakas are the first black family to own a winery in South Africa. Their wines are imported and distributed by Heritage Link Brands.

U. S. company dedicated to importing and distributing wine produced by indigenous Africans and people of African descent in its Diaspora, has a portfolio of wines including award winning brands like Seven Sisters, M'hudi, and One World. The wines, primarily from South Africa which is the 9th largest wine producing country in the world based on data compiled and reported by the Wine Institute (April 2010), are produced under careful product and quality management, using smart environmental practices, fair business practices, and sustainable agricultural techniques. Said a Cincinnati resident who tasted the wine at a local wine tasting event, "I liked the taste of the wines...they were

unique."

The wines can be purchased online (www.heritagelinkbrands.com) and are also available in 41 states across 1,000 retailers and restaurants. Customers throughout the U.S. include Disney, Sam's Club, and American Airlines. The company even offers a Heritage Link Brands Wine Club that ships wines to members at special prices! Locally in Greater Cincinnati, the wines can be found and purchased at a variety of stores including Jungle Jim's, Kroger, and biggs and restaurants including the Celestial Restaurant, Bonefish Grill, and Asiatique Bistro and Lounge to name a few.

In 2009, Selena and Khary were

Real sisters Yolanda, Vivian, Odelia, Carol, Twena, Dawn, and June joined forces to start Seven Sisters Wines, one of Heritage Link Brands most popular labels. Their farm in Stellenbosch, South Africa pictured below.



featured on the cover of Black Enterprise Magazine when they were honored with the B. E. Next Award, presented to the "fearless young entrepreneur age 21-35 tapped to be a future business leader." The company's imported wines have been recognized with industry awards; winning accolades from the London International Wine Challenge, Decanter Magazine, and Wine Spectator, among others. The story of Heritage Link Brands and its wines have been featured by numerous media outlets including TIME, Forbes Magazine, PBS, CBS News, ABC News, and the Today Show.

Without a doubt, Heritage Link Brands has been busy and the journey is not over. Hardwork, dedication, and passion are cornerstones of their success. While the Heritage Link Brands journey has not been easy, it has been and continues to be both rewarding and fulfilling.

South Africa has a rich history spanning the struggles of apartheid to treasured music by artists like the late Miriam Makeba to the beautiful natural treasures of its homeland. Telling these stories of African culture is part of the mission of Heritage Link Brands and it begins with the company's wine offerings. The journey continues as the doors to success open even wider for Heritage Link Brands. There is more to come as the company looks to its future connecting 2 continents, building a successful business.

And just think, it all began with a sip of wine and the pursuit of a dream!

For more information

Heritage Link Brands Website:

<http://www.heritagelinkbrands.com/>

Heritage Link Brands on Facebook:

<http://facebook.com/heritagelink>

Heritage Link Brands on Twitter:

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