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In 1926 a former political party leader said, 'A flag is not a mere cloth. A flag is able to move to tears, stir the deepest springs of action and inspire to the noblest efforts.' True words indeed! One only has to look at how the design of the flag has been incorporated into hundreds of logos, themes and advertisements to realise how popular the South African flag really has become. But designing a flag is no small matter. Ask Fred Brownell, the State Herald of the Republic of South Africa. He wrestled for three years to come up with a design for a new South African flag. No amateur in this field, he knew the ground rules:

- You must have light colours between dark ones - otherwise, when your flag is viewed from far, it looks like a blur
 - You must have a design that people can draw - not necessary exact but if they cannot get the essence it causes problems. The more twirls and whirls, the more trouble you're asking for
 - Birds, animals and fancy artwork is a no-no. As he says, you're inviting cynics to turn your eagle into a crow or your lion into a tortoise... Whatever political colours the nations have, you better show all or nothing
 - Don't rely on the wind blowing. The fatal temptation of flag design is to focus on the full-out flag. Much of the time it will hang limp from its post - it is then that you must also be able to recognise it
 - Light blue background gets lost against the sky, white background gets scruffy fast and any hint of subtlety turns to a mystery at the top of a flagpole.
- So there you have it - straight from the horse's mouth.

It took Brownell three years to come up with a winning design - in his

words: 'It was one percent inspiration and ninety nine percent perspiration!'

But all was not well. Came the new flag (March 1994) and with it a chorus of disapproval. It was 'meaningless, undignified and undemocratic, it resembles a beach towel, a jockstrap, a school-boy's cattie, a carpet design, 'n kniekomers, it has more mismatched colours than you'll find in a hooker's make-up kit...'

However, on 27 April 1994 the new flag was officially taken into use and by May the flag was raising lumps in our throats, by July it was more than a mere symbol - it was a possession. 'You saw it on key rings, beach towels, coffee mugs, garden walls.' Body painters went mad. Within months South Africans had in many instances overtaken the Americans' devotion to their flag. The fact that everybody was actually transgressing the law under the Heraldry Act was too bad - South Africans - young and old - have embraced their flag like few other nations have.

Here we share with you some of the creative ideas, interpretations and uses inspired by the flag.

Source

Flying with pride the story of the South African flag - Denis Beckett. Wildnet Africa (Pty) Ltd, 2002.



Children of South Africa were asked to use the flag to depict the balance between mankind and nature in a competition launched by Wildnet Africa

The central design of the flag, beginning at the flag-pole in a V form and flowing into a single horizontal band to the outer edge of the fly, can be interpreted as the convergence of diverse elements within South African society, taking the road ahead in unity

