

# HAIL CHIEF YVONNE

REVERED: Yvonne Chaka Chaka

PHOTO: ANTONY KAMINJU



## Liberia honours Chaka Chaka

### Gugu Sibiya

Yvonne Chaka Chaka, the little urchin from the dusty streets of Dobsonville in Soweto, has been conferred a chieftainship in the West African country of Liberia.

The coronation happened in the village of Stnkor in Monrovia, and attracted multitudes of traditional leaders to witness the honour regarded as sacred to the singer.

Affectionately

referred to as the Princess of Africa, Chaka Chaka had travelled to Liberia to perform at the Women's Colloquium. She was sharing the stage with Sibongile Khumalo, Onyeka Onwini (Nigeria), Julee Endee (Liberia), Rene Pilage' (Ivory Coast) and Bebe Manga (Cameroon) when the traditional queen, cultural ambassador and traditional singer Endee, seized the opportunity to confer the honour.

A still dazed though exhilarated Chaka Chaka, who is now referred to as Chief Soukoko, said: "At first I thought it was a joke but when I saw all those women and men who carry themselves

with such dignity gathered there, I realised the magnitude of the ceremony, that it was serious. Everything about it, especially the traditional ceremony, was real.

"I was humbled and would love to go back to Liberia to thank the people for the honour. It's very important for me to stay in touch with the people. I would like to single out Julee in particular for facilitating the process so diligently."

Going back to that moment in time, the Princess of Africa says: "I am in awe of how high in esteem they hold their cul-

ture. They have just emerged from a difficult war, but they remain

proud. Although she has lived and studied in the US, Julee remains refreshingly proud to be a cultural leader in Liberia.

"Besides the many traditional leaders, I remember the pulsating and rhythmic African drummers and the hat I was adorned with that signals my chieftainship, and I feel the heavy and sobering load of responsibility."

Endee said: "We chose Yvonne because of her love for humanity and selflessness. Yvonne is up to the task, she will not let us down."