

Daily Dispatch

OUR OPINION

Mkolo's money trail mystery

AS OUR "lifestyle audit" on Saturday shows, Pumlani Mkolo has done very well for himself.

The high school dropout, who features more and more each week in the unfolding Mandela memorial taxi scandal, owns two luxury cars and at least one upmarket home.

He also has enough cash in the bank to bail out the bankrupt Border Rugby Football Union, the amateur arm of which he is president.

A magnanimous gesture, indeed, but one which begs the question of where he got the money from.

Since Mkolo's emergence as a key figure in the memorial saga, the Dispatch has tried to piece together his past to understand how he came to wield such influence.

Some of his connections include Mlululeki George, the former ANC man who effectively tutored Mkolo.

He is also close to property developer Sisa Ngebulana, who sold Mkolo a home in Gonubie in a private deal. The property remains in the name of one of Ngebulana's companies, however, with a sum of about R400 000 still owing on it.

There are also rumours of a Bonnie Doon property which Mkolo is said to be redeveloping.

Neither of these homes is registered in his name.

Mkolo is well known in boxing circles, too, counting promoter Mzi Mnguni among his close associates.

But even together, none of this adequately accounts for his wealth.

According to sources, Mkolo's first real job was only two years ago when he became the ANC's regional secretary in Buffalo City.

The post earns him R37 000 a month. Not small change, but hardly enough to justify his lifestyle.

He also claims nominal travel allowances from the rugby union, which, according to documents obtained by the Dispatch, owes him more than R600 000 for a loan.

There is so much about Mkolo that requires answers.

His could be a story of inspiration, about how a boy from Mdantsane who left high school in Grade 9 came good with a mix of street smarts and perseverance.

But instead the tale reeks of something more sinister.

Mkolo's reach, we know, extends deep into city hall. He holds the kind of sway that lets cadres know just who's boss.

Somehow money ends up in the accounts of girlfriends and former lovers for inexplicable reasons.

No one can explain it, and no one wants to.

And yet they must. He must.

Mkolo has already dodged questions from the Dispatch on the source of his loan to Border Rugby.

He has been similarly reluctant to account for his role in the Mandela burial scandal.

The Dispatch has completed its lifestyle audit on Mkolo. Perhaps it is time a more persuasive authority, like the Hawks, had a go.



Money and politics: toxic mix needing to be diluted

POLITICAL parties require funds, but no one knows how much will be spent on campaigning for this year's elections given the complete lack of transparency of the funding of political parties.

The lack of regulation of private funding to parties also represents a major gap in South Africa's anti-corruption framework.

Political parties seem to agree that transparency is a good thing, but when it comes to disclosing private funding sources it remains a matter of "show me yours and I'll show you mine".

As much as the ANC has been coy about its donations, the DA has also been reticent to disclose its sources of funding.

At a recent seminar hosted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Cape Town, ANC treasurer-general Zweli Mkhize admitted that regulation was necessary, but argued that the details should not be subsumed by politicking over the issue.

The DA's Lance Greyling also agreed on the importance of regulating private funding, but pointed out that several attempts to bring this onto parliament's agenda over a period of 10 years had been consistently stymied by the ruling party.

"Donors, specifically companies, should be held to account for the donations they make"

Given that South Africa is holding national and provincial elections on May 7, there is an increased need for political parties to seek resources from companies and wealthy individuals. But Greyling argued that the playing field was not fair as government resources were being used to favour the ruling party during election time, specifically with increased advertising of government achievements.

There is also the question of political party investment vehicles such as the ANC's Chancellor House, which has been bidding for state contracts.

Mkhize agreed that Chancellor House should not be bidding for state contracts, yet he disagreed with Greyling over the banning of investment arms. Mkhize believes that regulating investment vehicles

JUDITH FEBRUARY

would be a more realistic option.

In the seminar, Lawson Naidoo of the Council for the Advancement of the Constitution (CASAC) and Greg Solik of My Vote Counts both emphasised that South Africa should fulfil its international obligations in terms of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, which calls for transparency with regard to all political donations. South Africa is a signatory to the convention and should therefore take action to promote disclosure.

Naidoo reminded attendees that donors – specifically companies – ought to be held to account for the donations they make.

This means transparency in terms of how they decide to make donations, for example, whether it is in proportion to a party's representation in parliament, or whether alternative formulas were used to determine the amount donated.

So, the question remains – who will lead the way in closing this gap in South Africa's transparency regime?

Logically, it should be the ruling party, with its overwhelming majority in parliament. Yet, at the ISS discussion, Mkhize seemed to be arguing that it was the task of all political parties to return to "first principles" on this matter and push for it to be debated at parliament.

"In the absence of regulation, the public can never be certain that policy decisions are being made in their best interests."

The ANC's commitment to transparency in relation to party funding was articulated in its Polokwane resolutions.

It therefore already has a mandate from its members to legislate on this issue. Yet, there has been little movement on the matter since then. Mkhize also made some useful suggestions regarding the establishment of a democracy fund through which donations can be filtered.

It is clear political parties need money to operate, but being open about where the money comes from is crucial if parties – and the ruling party in particular, given the power it exercises over government – is serious about its stated commitments to manage conflicts of interest and tackle tender-related corruption.

Without such transparency, there is no way of knowing, for instance, whether tenders are being allocated in return for donations to the ANC. This raises questions and suspicion that something is being offered in return to those who donate.

In the absence of regulation, the public can never be certain that policy decisions are being made in the best interests of the country, rather than the narrow interests of those who donate at the expense of the public interest.

It is clear that the R102-million per annum of public money that political parties currently receive is not enough to finance the myriad activities they need to undertake. It is particularly challenging to contest an election in South Africa: a vast country with large rural areas, 11 languages and a low literacy rate.

Ensuring that voters are aware of a party and its policies is costly. It is therefore considered unrealistic to outlaw private donations, as multi-party democracy requires healthy political parties.

However, as CASAC points out, a discussion on how money is being spent is also long overdue. Many companies have raised reservations about their donations simply being spent on posters during election time, rather than activities that deepen democracy and citizen participation.

Perhaps more of these donations should be spent on research capacity within political parties, therefore raising the level of national debate, Naidoo argued.

The regulation of such private donations represents mainstream modern democratic thinking, though the detail of the regulation varies globally and should be contextually orientated. In Britain for example, public disclosure of contributions is required only if it is made by corporations

and unions. Parties are required to submit quarterly reports to the Electoral Commission that specify donor information such as their name, address and the nature of the donation.

German law entitles parties to receive donations, but those that exceed a value of 10 000 (R144 389) per year must be publicly disclosed by giving the name and address of the donor, as well as the total amount in an annual report. Donations that exceed 50 000 have to be reported immediately.

Whatever the shortcomings of regulating private funding to political parties (and there have been shortcomings in countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States with the implementation of regulations), the advantages of transparency are abundantly clear.

The argument from opposition parties is that transparency could lead to the victimisation of their donors – although no instances of this happening have been reported.

Increasing public funding might only be part of the solution, because public money will never be enough and will not do away with political parties' need to raise private money. In a sense, requesting greater amounts of public money is only one aspect of this challenge: the nub of the problem lies in the millions of rands raised in secret, and the accountability deficit that this has created in our political processes.

Perhaps the new parliament might start its term with a commitment to filling the lacuna in South Africa's anti-corruption apparatus, and initiating legislation to ensure that political parties are transparent about their sources of funding.

The public has a right to know who political parties are being funded by, because secrecy only breeds mistrust and an environment that is ripe for corruption.

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CHIEL

Crayfish for breakfast

THEY'RE furtive, nervous and lovable all at the same time. They're otters; and despite the continuing spread of human development into their domain, and pressure on their food sources, it seems there are more and more being seen around us. Latest report of an interesting sighting comes from Kidds Beach resident Andy Russell who told me to contact his neighbours, Jeff and Rona Gradwell, who had an interesting story to tell about Jeff's experience on the rocks in front of their seaside home.

What's more, he took great photos to prove it. Jeff was fishing one morning recently – he didn't catch any fish, but he did catch sight of a Cape clawless otter doing its own fishing in one of the gullies nearby.

Finally it emerged from a dive clutching a crayfish in its mouth, clambered out of the water, settled on a rock nearby and started breaking the shell and eating the flesh.

It was too good a story to tell without a photo to prove it, so Jeff dashed back to the house across the road, returned with a camera and took some lovely shots (see picture below) of the otter devouring its prize.

After everything edible was consumed, it dived back into the sea and was last seen swimming east past where Jeff was having



no luck. (Sounds a familiar story; is anyone locally catching any fish in the turbid, cold water we've had for the past six months? I haven't heard of anything). Also called African clawless otters because they range through much of sub-Saharan Africa in both fresh and salt water habitats, they are the world's second biggest freshwater otters after giant Brazilian otters, and eat crabs, fish, worms and frogs – add crayfish to the list! They can weigh up to 16kg and have a body and tail length of 1.64m. Their Brazilian cousins are huge – 31kg and 2.4m long!

I have never seen an otter anywhere on the Wild Coast, but many from Kei Mouth and westward. Fishing with friends at Thyspunt near Oyster Bay some years ago, we had a pair diving in a gully and surfacing with shellfish which they ate while floating on their back, unconcerned by us only 15m or so from them. I also had a wonderful sighting when surf fishing at Cape St Francis one evening while the sun was setting. A pair came scampering out of the dunes, ran along the beach and leapt into the sea, teasing dogs that ran into the waves by diving out of sight. Early morning strollers at Nahoon Beach have also reported seeing otters gambolling in the surf. We've had sporadic sightings over the years in the Nahoon estuary, the last a few months back of one swimming and fishing next to our jetty at twilight. We also suspect that vigorous splashing in the shallows heard at night from time to time is the same thing.

A freshly eaten and large mud crab on rocks nearby was further evidence; shell-packed droppings too. And now they eat crayfish as well! Chiel today is Robin Ross-Thompson; robinross@gmail.com

FROM OUR FILES

April 14 1964: Ian Smith became the first Rhodesian-born premier when he was elected Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia this week. Smith helped Winston Field form the all-white, conservative Rhodesian Front (RF) in 1962, calling for the colony's full independence without an immediate shift to black majority rule. Smith stepped up to the premiership after Field resigned.

April 14 1984: Zola Budd, the 17-year-old Bloemfontein barefoot, track athlete who slipped into Britain last month, will soon compete in her first serious run abroad. Budd's story became controversial after she was excluded from international athletics competition because of the South African sports boycott and her decision to try to acquire British citizenship in order to qualify for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Winning the upcoming election our main concern

THE column by Xolani Somaca (DD, 11 April 2014) refers. I am at a loss for words as to what has possessed my dear comrade, Somaca.

I should think his revolutionary tact and conscience would quietly whisper into his arrogant ear that, as the ANC, we are at a critical time and point where we are facing the elections and it is in our best interests as the ANC to use every available resource, human or otherwise, to win these elections.

We are not going to shy away from issues he has raised. The ANC is already dealing with all these issues.

I fail to see his reasoning when he says the president and the ANC should take full responsibility for what he terms the Nkandla scandal.

We are under no illusion about what impact this has caused on us as an organisation and the long-term effects thereof, but we are dealing with the matter.

The ANC and its branches must be given the necessary space to campaign for elections and we will, in our own time, deal with the ramifications of the issue.

I cannot speak for the other person who he spoke about but I will defend the organisations he demonises in his column. Never will we allow people to drag

through the mud our organisation unnecessarily. — **Silumko Bushula, Summerpride**

Dear Mr Viwe Sidali,

YOUR ludicrous utterances are not helping any of the comrades; instead it is deepening public suspicion.

The public is constantly curious about certain activities of public institutions and individuals participating in them.

You are extremely irresponsible to try and act as a spin doctor or lawyer for particular individuals as you not only damage their characters, but that of the organisation too.

Please allow the truth to set these individuals free.

These reckless and comical assertions compel us to draw the following conclusions:

- You are more loyal to individuals than to the organisation and therefore will continue hero worshipping them, instead of allowing certain fair processes to clear them.

- You suffer from a serious knowledge deficiency and you need to engage more in the knowledge accumulation processes or;
- You are a beneficiary of these pro-

cesses and fear the fate of these individuals might determine your own destiny.

Let us therefore, as true revolutionaries and responsible citizens, ensure our actions are beyond reproach and subject ourselves to public scrutiny where necessary, because we do not have anything to hide anyway.

Avoid becoming what Lenin called "a useful idiot". — **Yours, Jerry, Morning-side**

Settle mine dispute

IF the mineworkers on the platinum mines are retrenched and the mines closed down that will be a failure of our government to intervene on behalf of the people and the poor.

It will be immature not to intervene on the basis that it is Amcu and not Num that is on strike.

At the end of the day it does not change the fact many of those mineworkers are our brothers and sisters from Ntabankulu, Mt Ayliff, Mbizana, Flagstaff, Lusikisiki, PSJ, Libode, Ngqeleni, Mqanduli, Mthatha, Qumbu, Tsolo, Mt Frere, Matatiele, Ngcobo, Cala, Lady Frere, Mt Fletcher, Buterworth, Dutywa, Elliotdale and elsewhere in the region.



FIKILE MBALULA

The ANC must wake up because most of its votes come from these rural areas I had mentioned.

Forget about Joseph Mathunjwa and his Amca but intervene as a developmental state on behalf of the majority and poor.

Stop the strike and force the mine owners and workers to reach middle ground.

This is not acceptable at all. — **Mbe-wuyethu Mbewu**

Forcing race quotas

IN this country people do not need other people putting them down because they do it themselves.

In response to the Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula stating they are going to up the quotas in sports teams, all he is saying is that black people need a helping hand to make it to the top of the sporting world.

We are more than 20 years out of isolation but we are still struggling to get out of this rut.

Wake up Mr Minister, you cannot force people to be number one in their chosen sport. When they do get to the top that's when they know they have achieved something.

How can they sing the national anthem with pride when they have only been given their jersey and not earned it?

There are so many black players in all forms of sport in this country, why then must the government interfere and make each and every black player feel as if he only got to the top because of help?

You are made to feel inferior when you get helped and not get picked for your ability, skills and hard work but simply for your skin colour.

All these words such as "quotas, equity etc" are words that just make the black

person feel inferior.

A person who wants to get to the top like that has no self-respect. Come on, after all these years does anybody need help?

How many more years do you need Mr Minister? — **Steven Schmidt, East London**

I COULDN'T believe what I was reading when I saw the article (DD, April 8th, Mbalula hands down ultimatum on quotas)

It is similar to the ban imposed on South Africa during the apartheid era. I have the greatest respect for black players, who are selected in whatever field.

He is testing our democracy by choosing players not on merit but by the colour of their skin.

The system of 60% black players chosen in team games will be devastating to our national and international standing.

This almost sounds like a belated April Fool's joke. — **Ropes Rohland, via e-mail**

NOTE TO WRITERS

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