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SPIRITUAL TRAVELLER



CONNECTOR: John Locksley with his teacher, MamNgwevu, right, and Tata Sukhwini, who is her husband and clan leader.

Picture: LEON NTELE

White sangoma now travels the world

By DAVID MACGREGOR
Port Alfred Bureau

WHEN a white Rhodes University psychology student graduated with honours and told friends and family he was ready to train as a sangoma, many thought he had lost his mind.

"Some people just could not understand it when I told them I had been called to become a sangoma," John Locksley said. Fourteen years later - including a 10-year township apprenticeship with well-known Grahamstown sangoma MamNgwevu - Locksley is fast gaining a reputation around the world as an African shaman or medicine man.

Initiated Ucingolwendaba - "the messenger or connector between people and cultures" - by MamNgwevu, the 38-year-old

Locksley now juggles his time between the UK, Europe, the US and his City of Saints home.

Based in Oxfordshire, Locksley now travels the world holding ubuntu workshops to help people "to honour their own ancestors and to connect with ancestral wisdom and guidance through nature and the dream world".

But he makes sure he takes four months' "retreat time" every year so he can return to Grahamstown and work as a traditional sangoma.

While in South Africa, he spends his time collecting and studying traditional plant medicines, throwing bones and interpreting the dreams from uThixo (Great Spirit) and izinyanya (ancestors).

Treating everything from depression to insomnia, nervous

and anxiety disorders, "old family hurt and ancestral blocks", Locksley "uses sacred ceremony, rituals with herbs, and Xhosa songs and trance rhythms to encourage a profound remembering ... an honouring of the human spirit".

Although he is described as an "ancestrally trained and initiated Xhosa sangoma" on his African Shaman website, it took Ucingolwendaba years to respond to his "calling" - which happened when he was still an 18-year-old apartheid army conscript.

Locksley was working as a medic, treating black and white amputees from the Angolan war in 1990, when he was first called to be a sangoma.

"I used to greet the guys every morning and ask if they had any good dreams ... the black guys

never answered me."

That all changed one day when a Zulu special forces sergeant - who lost both legs above the knee - warned him off.

"He said: 'Private, don't ask if I had good dreams ... when I dream the ancestors tell me who is going to live and who is going to die in my platoon. In my culture dreams are sacred'."

Locksley later had his own "hyper-real, lucid dream" about his apprenticeship to an ancient sangoma - who told him he would first have to experience "real suffering" before he could realise his dreams.

The next day, Locksley woke up with Utwaza - sangoma sickness which is "inherent in all ancient shamanic cultures and can only be cured through apprenticeship to a shamanic teacher" - that manifested itself

through boils on his legs.

Traumatized when two of his patients died, Locksley later took up yoga and Zen Buddhism - even spending time training in the Far East - before he returned to South Africa to answer his calling.

Plagued by mystery illnesses over the years, Locksley finally achieved good health when he met MamNgwevu and she told him she had dreamed about him becoming her apprentice.

"All over the world, traditional indigenous knowledge is being lost.

"South Africa is very lucky that these old lineages and knowledge of medicinal plants survived apartheid and are still alive."

He now travels the world working with shamans from all walks of life.

Irate ANC warns DA: Hands off Madiba

Ruling party angered by rival's claim that it now represents Mandela's ideals

By SABELO SKITI
Political Reporter



NELSON Mandela's name is at the centre of a bitter war of words between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance after the opposition party claimed to best represent the former president's ideals.

This follows DA leader Helen Zille's public statements at various rallies throughout the country where she claimed the party was living up to Mandela's vision of a rainbow nation.

Yesterday, Eastern Cape DA leader Bobby Stevenson defended Zille, saying the party did embrace Mandela's vision and "as the Freedom Charter so aptly states, South Africa belongs to all who live in it, both black and white".

But the ruling party is incensed with the DA for daring to align itself with Mandela.

ANC Eastern Cape spokesperson Mlibo Qoboshiyane took a swipe at Zille, Stevenson and the party, saying associating Mandela with the DA was "political opportunism".

"Our former president, Comrade Nelson Mandela, has long said he is the member of the ANC ... his values, convictions are influenced by the character, policies and make-up of the ANC. Therefore it is political opportunism for the DA to distort such information in a des-

perate bid to ingratiate with the South African voters to vote for them," said Qoboshiyane.

"While the ANC appreciates any propensity by opposition parties to associate with our rich political history, heritage and commitment to improving the lives of our people, it is wrong for opposition parties to use such material and names of our leaders in trying to get votes from our people."

The DA shocked many a month ago when it launched its manifesto at the same venue, in Kliptown, where the ANC's fundamental guiding document, the Freedom Charter, was adopted.

Hundreds of DA supporters, largely black, clad in the party's colours, danced and sang along with Zille during the launch.

During her campaigning in Johannesburg's Alexandra township, Zille said: "We thank God - one God - for the safe return of Madiba to his family."

"We say today that we will not forget the promise of 1994. We will not forget your struggle. Alex knows the spirit of Madiba (who believes) in one nation, one future."

Invoking Mandela is sailing

too close to the wind for Qoboshiyane, who called on parties such as the DA to stop altering ANC struggle songs and slogans, saying it is "unethical, cheap politicking and exhibits lack of political content and authenticity on their part".

"Our material, heritage and leaders belong to the ANC, not these political groupings ... To us, these songs, slogans and other material was a result of our struggle to liberate our people from apartheid, responding to the inhumane killing of our people in and outside South Africa and in the mobilisation of our people towards building of better communities."

Stevenson, who is also DA leader in the provincial Legislature, hit back and said his party was now at the forefront of a different struggle in the province. "There is a new struggle for freedom that is being waged in our province today. It is a struggle for jobs, for service delivery, housing and decent roads, and the ANC is failing dismally in this regard."

Stevenson said the ruling party was panicked because the DA's ranks were swelling. "The voters of this province are clearly catching on to the fact that the DA delivers ... The DA does not just talk about a better life for all. We deliver one ... where the DA governs, the DA ... delivers ... to all." - sabelos@dispatch.co.za

Police behaviour 'went against the rules'

By HARRIET MCLEA

THE death of Andries Tatane, who was allegedly shot and beaten to death by police during a service delivery protest in eastern Free State, has sparked a wave of outrage at police.

"The service delivery protest in Ficksburg ended in death for the 33-year-old unarmed man, who was surrounded by at least six police officers who beat him with batons. Video footage aired on SABC news on Wednesday night showed Tatane bleeding from his chest and collapsing to the ground, dead.

It is still unclear who shot Tatane. Institute of Security Studies senior crime and justice researcher Johan Burger criticised police behaviour.

"It is fairly obvious the police went completely overboard in the way they conducted themselves in that incident," he said.

Burger said that Section 49.1 of the Criminal Procedures Act, which allows for police to use force when arresting a suspect, was flouted because the force used must be in proportion to the resistance.

"In this case - from what I saw - there was clearly no intention to conform to the law ... it was clearly disproportionate to the level of resistance that this guy projected," he said.

It is still unclear whether Tatane was shot by the police or by protesters, or if the wounds in his

back and chest were from live ammunition or rubber bullets.

Burger said that if police used rubber bullets, they had still flouted the rules.

"Rubber bullets can kill you if they are fired at you at point blank range. It's completely against the rules that guide the actions of the police," he said.

Burger also criticised "the obvious absence of command and control at the scene".

He also said the training of police officers in the footage "was clearly lacking".

Burger said that when the old public order policing units were "decentralised" in 2006, almost half of the units were effectively shut down.

With almost half their members redeployed to other units, the unit is not able to deal properly with mass incidents of disorder, said Burger.

"Hopefully we'll see the outcome of this investigation sooner rather than later," he added.

Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation senior researcher David Bruce said Tatane's death was "not isolated".

The number of people killed by police each year had risen steadily in the past decade, reaching a peak between April 2008 and March 2009, when 100 of the 568 people shot dead by police were either bystanders, intimate partners, people killed in arguments with police officers or people killed in firearm accidents.

Bruce said "the inadequacy of training speaks to the problem of leadership within the police and leadership about the use of force".

He said that police were uninformed about the "basic principles of minimum force" to defuse confrontations and avoid violence escalating.

A police colonel from KwaZulu-Natal, who asked to remain anonymous, told The Times yesterday police "brutality is increasing" and that incidents like the one in Ficksburg were because police did not have adequate non-lethal weapons like Tasers to deal with potentially dangerous situations.

"We have no form of non-lethal force. You can't carry a water cannon around with you," he said, adding that pepper-spray did not work in gusty conditions or further than two metres away.

He said that batons forced police to make physical contact but that he "did not want to cause someone injury" or be injured himself.

The only current alternative, the officer said, was a gun.

"Before the World Cup, we were told they were looking into the possibility of introducing Tasers but that never happened - Why, I don't know."

Politician in the poo for loo roll theft

A GERMAN politician has been caught short after janitors collared him red-handed pilfering toilet paper from the gents in the town hall during a sting operation, authorities said on Wednesday.

Janitors' suspicions were raised when more than 200 rolls vanished and they laid a trap for Frank-Michael John, 24, a member of the far-left Die Linke party in the region-



al council of Stralsund, northern Germany.

They discovered him exiting the toilet with one roll in his hand and another in a backpack, according to media reports.

"We are investigating the theft of several low-value items," Ralf Lechte, from the Stralsund prosecutors' office, said, con-

firmed the newspaper reports.

As the town hall buys toilet paper in bulk, the total value of the suspected theft is unlikely to amount to more than a few hundred euros, Lechte said.

"Whether charges are pressed will depend on the perpetrator and whether he has previous offences," he added. - Sapa-AFP



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