

# spin doctor on to his job

considered him no longer necessary



COURT BID: Wisani Ngobeni

Pule guilty of misconduct and lying under oath. She was suspended from parliament for 15 days, her salary was revoked for a month and she received a public reprimand from National Assembly speaker Max Sisulu.

Earlier this month, the department advertised Ngobeni's position, which comes with an "all-inclusive package of R934 866 per annum". The closing date for applications was Friday, but Carrim and Sekese have undertaken not to fill the vacancy until Ngobeni's matter is resolved.

In court papers, the department claims Ngobeni was seconded — not transferred — from the Free State government. In her affidavit, Sekese says the "secondment" had to be understood in context.

"The former minister of communications was experiencing negative publicity arising from certain allegations that were made against her and in connection with certain persons allegedly connected to her."

"It was in these circumstances that she considered the secondment of the applicant," she said.

"Those considerations are no longer relevant to the current minister of communications."

During his tenure at the department, Ngobeni lodged several complaints against this newspaper with the press ombudsman, who rejected his claims as spurious.

He also wrote an open letter to the Press Council, which criticised his "illogical conclusions".

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UNSHACKLED MIND: Actor and activist John Kani being photographed by Adrian Steirn for the 21 Icons project at the Market Theatre. Picture: GARY VAN WYK

## Kani fought apartheid with 'cultural AK47'

THEKISO ANTHONY LEFIFI

JOHN Kani, the internationally acclaimed South African actor, is known as a humble man — but he was very arrogant in his younger days.

The Eastern Cape-born veteran actor and director grew up with a superiority complex, he said.

"I am the best thing since sliced bread. I am the best thing since condensed milk," he said he was taught. "I was very confident and arrogant and very proud of being an African. I had absolutely no inferiority complex of any kind."

The attitude was instilled in him at a young age and he wanted to pass it on to other black people through his artistic work.

The attitude helped him and his colleagues in an acting collective in the 1960s to choose plays that motivated people to see themselves as human beings, as well as tell them that the power was in their hands to liberate themselves.

Kani, who is widely recognised as the grandfather of South African theatre, realised at an early age that he could use the stage and his art in the struggle against apartheid.

"Instead of wanting to pick up an AK47, I could pick up a cultural AK47. Instead of wiping out the white race, I could educate them and teach them about human dignity, respect and equality," he said.

He and his fellow actors were constantly harassed during performances by the security police. But Kani admits that he deliberately sought to provoke them through his work.

"If the police stopped the play, we knew it was making a difference. If they didn't, we went back to the drawing board to add more things. It felt it was wrong if it wasn't banned."

The 70-year-old has won numerous awards around the world, including a Tony Award in New York for the plays *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*.

And the South African government has bestowed on him the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver for "excellent contributions to theatre and, through this, the struggle for a nonracial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa".

He was also honoured with a South African Film and Television Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010.

Being one of the 21 Icons is also a treasured honour.

He said that being associated with former president Nelson Mandela was "incredible" and "amazing".

He privately performed the play *Nothing but the Truth* for Mandela after the statesman insisted on seeing it before he went on one of his international presidential tours.

The play was not open to the public at the time.

Kani said although other artists could lay claim to performing for the Queen at royal command events or for the president of the US, he could proudly say: "I performed for the president of the Republic of South Africa."

Instead of wiping out the white race, I could educate them about human dignity, respect and equality

Like Mandela, Kani also spent time in prison.

He spent 23 days, mostly in solitary confinement, for performing some of the anti-apartheid plays that provoked the security forces at the time.

Filmmaker and photographer Adrian Steirn, the creator of 21 Icons South Africa, uses this arrest as his concept for the portrait of Kani, which is published in the R17 edition of Sunday Times today.

Shot at the Market Theatre — where Kani founded the Market Theatre Laboratory with Barney Simon — the portrait shows him seated, his hands cuffed, on stage.

The original, signed version will be auctioned at the end of the series and the proceeds will be donated to the John Kani Education Fund, which assists drama students attending The Lab who cannot afford the fees.

A short film about the making of the portrait will be screened on SABC3 at 6:57pm tonight.

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