

AT LUNCH WITH THE FM

A real boy scout

Matebello Motloung
with Draftfcb SA
executive chairman
Nkwenke Nkomo
at Lekgotla,
Sandton,
Johannesburg

He walks with the swagger of a 1960s jazz musician. Dressed in his trademark fez and a formal loose-fitting Afro-centric shirt, he greets me with a big smile before giving me a hug and a kiss on both cheeks.

Nkwenke Nkomo, group executive chairman at advertising agency Draftfcb SA, is one of the industry's most respected personalities. He's also quite a character: a former political prisoner who accepted a job as a copywriter at the-then Lindsay Smithers (now Draftfcb) ad agency 26 years ago without knowing what it involved.

"I thought they meant I would be writing articles or something like that. I had never been exposed to advertising so I didn't know what a copywriter was," he says, laughing at the memory.

I meet Nkomo, known by colleagues as "NN", at the ridiculously priced Lekgotla restaurant in Sandton. It's Tuesday afternoon. Since the Loeries advertising awards, which took place in Cape Town at the end of September, Nkomo has been the subject of industry gossip. This follows a newspaper report that he walked out when the Loeries crowd gave a rousing reception to Western Cape premier Hellen Zille.

"Why would I do something like that?" he asks, shaking his head, a cold Amstel in his hand. "The idea that I left the arena because of the audience reaction is absurd. It's a case of someone making an assumption and then not taking the time to validate it before repeating it."

Nkomo had received a Loeries lifetime achievement award on the Friday night. He says he wasn't sitting in the Draftfcb rows when Zille officially opened Saturday's proceedings. He had already joined agency MD Jerry Mpufane to sit with clients in another part of the hall.

We turn to the menu where the average price of a main meal is about R100. Nkomo favours the lamb shank which, he says, is his son Sizwile's favourite. I choose something forgettable. Nkomo has two children: Sizwile, a BCom accounting student at the University of Johannesburg, and Rhulani, who's studying law at Rhodes. When he was young, Nkomo wanted to be a musician. His passion is jazz. He sings and

mango juice to fill the gap.

Born in Daveyton, Ekurhuleni, Nkomo became politically active in the 1970s. A one-time leader of the SA Students' Organisation (Saso) and national organiser of the Black Consciousness Movement founded by Steve Biko, he was mentored by the late struggle icon.

In 1974, Nkomo and eight other Saso members, among them Cope leader Moses Molekane, were arrested and found guilty of conspiring to overturn the state by unconstitutional means. Nkomo spent eight years in prison, six of them on Robben Island.

His mantra is nobody owes him anything because of his past, and his accomplishments attest to that. A torchbearer of transformation in the industry, he's worked his way up from copywriter to creative director and eventually executive chairman and shareholder at Draftfcb. He's a former chairman of the Advertising Standards Authority and of



HOW HE CHILLS

He loves listening to jazz and watching soccer

plays sax. So it's no surprise to learn Rhulani is also musical, though her skill is classical piano.

Few know Nkomo is a recorded artist. A founding member of the Gospel Proclaimers, he recorded two songs before going to prison. His biggest regret is that the recording happened after his sister died. "She was in the league of Aretha Franklin and Sibongile Khumalo."

Our meal arrives. The portions are disappointing. I order a second glass of

the Association for Communication & Advertising (ACA). In 2008, he was appointed to head the team that prepared the marketing, advertising and communication industry transformation charter. It has yet to be gazetted.

Maybe this willingness to serve stems from the fact that Nkomo has been a boy scout since 1957. He was chief scout of SA from 1996 to 2005 and still serves on the World Scout Committee.

Matebello Motloung

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