

Oscar Dumisani Dhlomo (1943–2008)

Business, the intelligentsia and politics in South Africa, especially the province of KwaZulu-Natal, have been dealt a heavy blow by the sudden death of one of the prominent leaders in these fields.

The death on Friday 29 August 2008 of Dr Oscar Dumisani Dhlomo, has been almost universally seen as a severe loss to the country. Dhlomo, who died the age of 64, cut his political teeth as a leading member of the then Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe (National Cultural Movement), which was to later become the Inkatha Freedom Party, under the leadership of veteran politician *Inkosi* Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Having joined the movement in 1978, Dhlomo rose within its ranks to eventually attain the position of Secretary-General, before resigning and quitting active politics in 1990.

During the same year, however, he founded the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, an intellectual think tank whose aim was to foster and support the institution of democratic practice in South Africa.

Dhlomo was born in Umbumbulu, south of Durban, on 28 December 1943. He completed his matric at Amanzimtoti Training College before proceeding to the University of Zululand, where he obtained a BA degree in 1965, followed by a University Education Diploma in 1967.

He went on to teach history at Menzi High School in Umlazi, and while teaching continued to study privately, obtaining an honours degree and Bachelor of Education from the University of South Africa three years later. He joined his *alma mater*, the University of Zululand, as history lecturer soon thereafter.

Dhlomo held directorships in several prominent companies in the province. Among the several chairmanships he held were with The Natal Witness Printing and Publishing Company, the Standard Bank, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, Afrisun KZN and Shell SA.

Dhlomo's leadership capabilities and contributions received recognition through the award of the Ernest Oppenheimer Travel Fellowship from the British Council.

He was also a columnist for *The Star* newspaper, and co-authored two school textbooks in *Guided Social Studies* which were prescribed for grades seven and nine.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sibusiso Ndebele said Dhlomo's death 'casts a big shadow over the province of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa.'

As an intellectual, said Ndebele, '[Dhlomo] attracted attention through his writing on the burning issues of the day with the problems of education claiming more of his thought-provoking attention.'

At the funeral service, Inkatha Freedom Party leader Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi said Dhlomo's resignation from politics 'left a big void' in his party.



Oscar Dhlomo

Dhlomo is survived by his wife Nokukhanya, three sons and a daughter.

The funeral service was held at his place of birth, at the United Congregational Church, Umbumbulu, on September 6, 2008, followed by a cremation at the Stellawood cemetery in Durban.

THABO MASEMOLA