

A compilation of media articles about the

ICONS OF ALEXANDRA

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Profile of Joe Nhlanhla

Joe Nhlanhla has dedicated his life to the struggle to liberate the black people from the bondages of apartheid. It is through his contribution of his extraordinary capacity of intelligence and militancy that today South Africans enjoy the benefits of a peaceful democratic country. His commitment to the struggle will always be honored and remembered by the Alexandrians and the rest of the country.



- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla was born on 4 December 1936 in Sophia town.
- ❑ He was one of the five children of Christina Toli (born Buhali) and Samuel Nhlanhla.
- ❑ Both parents were originally from the Free State Province (formerly known as Orange Free State).
- ❑ His father left Free State as he refused to be under the oppressive racist rules of the area he lived in.
- ❑ In Sophia town, Joe Nhlanhla's father stayed with his uncle, who trained him to be a shoemaker.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla's mother joined the father after he bought a house at Sophia town.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla's family was forcefully removed from Sophia town, as land was taken away from property owners by the state.
- ❑ Consequently the family bought property and stayed in Alexandra when Joe Nhlanhla was only beginning school, at the age of seven.
- ❑ He attended school at the local primary school named, Ikage Primary School.
- ❑ While residing at Alexandra, Joe Nhlanhla's father established a church- African Apostolic Church.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla, as a child, always refused to go to church. He told his parents that he will only go to church when black people are liberated from the bondages of apartheid.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla saw Christianity as a weapon to oppress and divert black people's minds from what really mattered- the oppressive apartheid rules.
- ❑ Just like his vigilant father, Joe Nhlanhla became interested in the politics of the country and saw education as one way of surmounting apartheid regime.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla spent minimal time playing in the streets, like children in townships would normally do, and focused on his books in an endeavor to have a handle on the politics of the country at that time.
- ❑ He enrolled at Kilnerton High School, where he matriculated in 1956.
- ❑ As a person who always had an interest in politics, he finally joined the African National Congress (ANC), and was an active member of the ANC youth league (ANC YL).
- ❑ During this period, he served as the secretary of the Alexandra Youth League and was a member of the Transvaal Executive Committee of the ANC Youth League.
- ❑ Furthermore he was involved in the anti-pass campaign as well as the 1957 bus and potato boycotts.
- ❑ He was among the first people to be arrested during the 1960 state of emergency and was detained on 28 March that year.
- ❑ On his release a few days before the lifting of the emergency, he was confined to the magisterial area of Johannesburg.
- ❑ His political charisma didn't send him off sports fields. He was a very active sports person - playing tennis and football. He played for the local Alexandra soccer team named Rangers Football Club.
- ❑ After the ANC was banned, Joe Nhlanhla joined its underground structures.
- ❑ In 1964 he left South Africa to join the ANC military wing - Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), in Tanzania. While in Tanzania, he was selected to go to Moscow where he studied Economics at the Plekhavon Institute, from October 1964 until 1969.
- ❑ He headed the ANC YL and student structures in the USSR and organized ANC YL conferences.
- ❑ In 1970 Joe Nhlanhla returned to the Tanzania base, serving as head of the ANC youth and student structures until 1973, when he became the ANC's chief representative in Egypt and Middle East. During this time he, in addition, represented the ANC at Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization.
- ❑ In 1978 Joe Nhlanhla was recalled to the ANC headquarters in Lusaka to become the organization's National Administrative Secretary. In 1981, he became a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee.
- ❑ In 1983 he was appointed as the Secretary of the ANC's Political Military Council - established to deal with internal mobilization within SA.
- ❑ In 1987, in reorganizing the Intelligence and Security Section of the ANC, Joe Nhlanhla was appointed to head the Department of Intelligence and Security.
- ❑ Having stayed 26 years in exile, on February 1990, Joe Nhlanhla returned to the shores of South Africa.
- ❑ The struggle continued for Joe Nhlanhla and he served in the Steering Committee, preparing for Groote Schuur

- Conference between South African government and ANC, and was the ANC delegate.
- ❑ In December 1992, Joe Nhlanhla attended the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). He moreover served on its working group dealing with interim government. He subsequently became involved in negotiations on the future of the Intelligence Services in South Africa.
- ❑ In April 1994, Joe Nhlanhla stood as an ANC Candidate in the General Elections and became a Member of Parliament (MP).
- ❑ In July 1994 was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Intelligence. In this post, he chaired the National Intelligence Coordinating Committee, which oversees the country's four intelligence agencies (NIA), SASS, Police and the Military.
- ❑ In 1999, Joe Nhlanhla was announced as the Minister of Intelligence until he left the job due to illness. He stepped down after suffering from a stroke in July 2000.
- ❑ Joe Nhlanhla is blessed by a son and is married to Mmabatho.
- ❑ In thanking the Human Rights Commission, for hosting the Racism Conference, President Thabo Mbeki, paid tribute to this revolutionary, Comrade Joe Nhlanhla, for the valuable service he has selflessly given to the country and wished him a speedy recovery.

Soccer icon, Irvin Koza

The following is a compilation of extracts from various news articles on the "Iron Duke", soccer's Irvin Khoza...

- Article: [It's Dr. Irvin Khoza to you!](#)
26 May 2004 - [SASoccer365](#)

Excerpt:

Orlando Pirates chairman Dr. Irvin Khoza was on Saturday honoured with an honorary doctorate by the University of Zululand in Ngoye.

The award is in recognition of Khoza's role in the development of sport, days after he returned from Zurich, Switzerland, where he helped South Africa win the right to host the first ever soccer World Cup on African soil.



Photo Source:
[SASoccer365](#)

- Article: ['Iron Duke' ducks out of firing line](#)
08 February 2004 - [Sunday Times](#)

Excerpt:

Ten things you didn't know about Irvin Khoza

1. A successful businessman, Khoza's initial wealth was amassed through property bonds and construction. He owns Kliptown's Freedom Square, a shopping centre he bought for R42-million. At one stage he was a director of more than 20 companies.
2. Khoza was born on January 27, 1948 in Alexandra, north of Johannesburg. His mother was a cleaner at the local clinic, but little is known about his father.
3. He seldom visits the Orlando Pirates dressing room, but he always does so when his team plays against their long-time archrivals, Kaizer Chiefs.
4. He is hardly ever seen in public with his wife of many years, Elsie Matina.
5. For the past two years Khoza has driven a flashy BMW, courtesy of the car giant's sponsorship of the 2010 Cup bid. The registration number is 2010 GP.
6. Former NSL chief and Pirates director Cyril Kobus is one of his closest friends.
7. He likes eating traditional food, with spinach and pap being among his favourite dishes.
8. He was expelled from Fort Hare University, reportedly for his opposition to apartheid.
9. At 14, he became the secretary of the Alexandra Football Association.
10. He began his education at the Roma Mission School in Alexandra before attending Orlando High in Soweto.



Photo Source:
[Sunday Times](#)

- Article: [Irvin Khoza goes back to school](#)
25 April 2004 - [Sunday Times](#)

Excerpt:

The Iron Duke and his former schoolmates pay tribute to their dedicated teachers.
By Victor Khupiso.

A SOFTER, more personal side of tough soccer boss Irvin "Iron Duke" Khoza emerged last week at a reunion of his classmates from Alexandra High School, north of Joburg.

The reunion last Saturday was attended by three decades of students, many of whom are now top businessmen, MPs and movers and shakers.

The 50-year-old Orlando Pirates boss, who was a pupil at the school from 1964 to 1966, organised the reunion to honour the teachers who, he said, had shaped the lives of their students under tough conditions.

"We are all what we are because of these teachers. It is appropriate to thank them and to show them that we acknowledge their roles in shaping our destiny in life.

Growing up in Alexandra during the hard times of apartheid and the gangsterism of the Msomi and the Spoilers gangs was not good at all, but our teachers managed to give us direction" ...

... Alexandra Secondary School was started in 1938 by Elijah Noge, who was then principal of the Amalgamated Primary School on the corner of 12th Avenue and John Brand Street.

Alex High opened in the basement of the primary school with only four pupils. It was the only school where all ethnic groups could learn together ...

... "Jukskei River [which runs through Alexandra] produced global players and this would not have been possible without the dedication of these teachers. I travel the world and I meet students from Alexandra. Our teachers did so much ... and we are profoundly grateful for their immense contribution," he said...

New Treasury DG Lesetja Kganyago

By Helmo Preuss

Lesetja Kganyago, the new Director General (DG) of the South African National Treasury describes himself with a smile as "full of humour and compassion".

His widely-expected appointment was enthusiastically welcomed by his colleagues and the cheers and clapping easily carried up the two storeys to where I was waiting to interview him.

Kganyago is only 38 years old and is married to Sibusiso ("Blessing" in Zulu), who is a property developer with a hotel group. They have two sons, one, who is 4 years old, the other 10 months old.

"A challenge the past few years has been juggling work and family life. Once for instance I received an urgent message from my wife to pick up our son from kindergarten, as my wife was held up in a meeting. The only problem was that I was in Cape Town, so I had to call on a member of our extended family to help out. Without them there is no way that I could manage, and in the same way, I know that I have the support of my colleagues at Team Finance, although I never take their support or those of my family for granted," Kganyago said.

The collegiate atmosphere at Treasury was demonstrated by the fact that Kganyago was the only deputy DG who applied for the post of DG.

His favourite past time is hiking, either in the Drakensberg or in the Limpopo province. He has recently taken up golf, but finds little time to improve his game.

"The intention when I go hiking is to clear the head and leave my work behind, but invariably there are things that pop into my mind that are work-related," he said.

Kganyago was born on October 7 1965 in Alexandra township north-east of Johannesburg and within sight of the current offices of the JSE Securities Exchange South Africa (JSE) in Sandton.

"The reason I was born in Alexandra was to ensure that I got urban resident status. After five years I then moved with my mother to Polokwane ("the place of refuge") and that was where I matriculated," he said.

During the apartheid years, the government practiced influx control limiting the number of black South Africans who could move into urban areas. As recently as 1980, half of South Africa's black population still lived in rural areas, whereas more than 80% of South Africa's white population lived in urban areas.

During his youth therefore Kganyago only saw his father infrequently, as his father continued to work in Johannesburg as a "migrant worker".

His perseverance is demonstrated by the fact that he started his studies for a Bachelor of Commerce in 1983, but only completed it in 1991. All this studying was either part-time or through correspondence.

Although he majored in both accounting and economics, his initial work experience was in accounting at First National Bank, then the trade union federation, Cosatu, and finally the African National Congress (ANC).

"It was only when [Finance Minister] Trevor [Manuel] phoned me in 1991 that I considered changing career direction. Now I want to ensure that the Treasury becomes the first port of call for bright young economists when they consider a career," he said.

Turning to his new responsibilities, Kganyago said a hallmark of the first decade of the ANC government was its perseverance with stable predictable orthodox economic policies, and he was not going to change that.

"When the rand went haywire in December 2001, we stuck to our guns and we were not surprised when the rand recovered and reverted back to its mean. We can do nothing about the volatility in the rand except to persevere with stable predictable policies," he said.

He eschews special favours for any section of the economy and said that municipal bonds, which enjoy tax-free status in several nations, such as the US for instance, would not get a special deal in South Africa.

"I believe we have built a foundation for the re-establishment of the municipal debt market in South Africa. It has taken this long as we first had to consolidate several municipalities, then pass the Municipal Finance Act and the new municipalities had to establish a credit record. Now there are plans by such municipalities as Johannesburg to come to the capital market," Kganyago concluded.

Amongst his numerous awards, Kganyago has received the International Financing Review (IFR) deal of the year awards for the South African government's Yankee bond in 1997 and the South African government's Eurobond in 1999.



Lesetja Kganyago
Photo Source:
[Financial Mail](#)
Article:
[Sunday Times](#)

Rev Sam Buti, Alex's saviour

By Lucille Davie

THE Reverend Sam Buti was eventually threatened by his wife and children. His wife said: "I'm going to leave you!" His children said: "We're going to burn you!" He gave in, and resigned as mayor of Alexandra.

He had been elected mayor of Alex in the mid-1980s but this move was interpreted by Alexandrans as siding with the apartheid government and betraying their interests. In 1985 his house was bombed and razed to the ground. His family came under enormous pressure, and begged him to give up his mayorship, hence the threats.

It was a tense time. His wife, Mary, heard a bang in the middle of the night, and woke up to a smoke-filled house.

Buti told the *Vrye Weekblad* of April 1991 that he turned to drink under the pressure, almost destroying himself in the process, being saved finally by his faith.

"It was very difficult. It gives you strength. God is gracious," he says.

The *Vrye Weekblad* records that Buti said three things were saved from the fire that reduced his house to ashes: his wedding picture, his dress suit, and his wife's church dress. He says he saw the hand of God in the remains from the fire, and decided it was time to quit politics.

But before he did, he consulted with Nelson Mandela, then still in prison. "He advised me to resign from the local authority," says Buti now.

Although it must have been hard, he gave up his mayorship, and got more involved in church matters. In 1987 he was elected head of the *Nederduitse Gerformeerde Kerk* in Afrika, the breakaway black arm of the white-dominated Dutch Reformed Church.

He had been very involved in municipal politics and the future of Alexandra. He had initiated and drove the Save Alex Campaign in the late 70s through the Alexandra Liaison Committee, and his appeals to Minister of Co-operation and Development Piet Koornhof eventually halted the government's removal plans.

And once Alex was saved, he fought for Alex to be an independent municipality, was voted on to the Alex council, and was eventually elected mayor of Alex - but that was when his troubles started.

So, the man who was loved for saving Alex, then hated for becoming part of the despised local apartheid authority structure, had come full circle. These days his status in the community is restored - those who spoke out against him in the 80s seek out his advice and help now.

Saving Alex

Buti's connection with Alex, a township 12km north-east of Joburg's city centre, goes back to 1959. He was born in Brandfort in the Free State, and is a third-generation minister. He was sent to Alex in 1959 at the age of 25, after completing his theological training. He has lived there ever since.

Buti is of medium build and height, with a serious and unaffected manner. He is modest about his role in saving Alex from the bulldozers. He describes it now as having been a "tough time". A major part of the work of getting Alex saved was convincing his fellow Alexandrans, that, firstly, he was a genuine anti-apartheid activist despite being a Dutch Reformed Church minister, and secondly, that they could stand up to the system.

The first issue was serious: the apartheid government and the Dutch Reformed Church were virtually synonymous, and yet here was a black minister from that church wanting the community to take him seriously.

In *Alexandra I love you* (Published for the Alexandra Liaison Committee, 1983), Buti explains how he got around this one: "I bumped into Mr Khoza [LC Khoza, health inspector] on the way to the shops on 7th Avenue. We spoke about the threat of removals that had hung over us for so long and now looked like becoming a reality. He, like many other people in Alexandra, treated me with some reserve and perhaps a little distrust. I was after all a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church."

He continues: "I told him that although I was a priest in the Dutch Reformed Church, I was oppressed like every other black person. 'I feel the pinch just like you, just like every other black person,' I told him." This was sufficiently convincing for his fellow Alexandrans.



Reverend Sam Buti
[source: [Jo'news](#)]

The second issue was just as tricky. In Alexandra, I love you he says: "People were suspicious at first. They didn't believe that we could ever reverse the decisions of Parliament.

"But what we did bring home was that these were issues that would affect lives . . . lots of lives . . . and that we were trying, really trying, to save Alex. We preached resistance tactics first through the churches and then at the schools. We were trying to get the residents to believe that they shouldn't go, that they should stay and fight. Some didn't, but a lot did."

And that meant on-the-ground action. Officials would remove furniture onto the streets, in preparation for the removals. "We would take the furniture back inside." The same happened with windows and doors - they'd be removed from the houses, to be promptly put back by residents. "They didn't know how to arrest us."

He has sobering things to say about politics and politicians. "Everything is politics but politics is not everything." He says there's a need to get people - in other words, politicians - to focus, to come to their sense, to force politicians to talk development, "if you want people to vote for you".

In the early 70s he started the fight to get electricity in the township, for decades referred to as "dark city" because it had no electricity. "I went to the officials, you've got to be strategic in dealing with officials." He obviously was. His was the first household to be electrified in Alex.

His congregation

Buti ministers to his congregation of 1 300 at the large church on the corner of Selborne Street and 5th Avenue. He was originally a minister in the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Africa, a breakaway branch of the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1974 a further breakaway group including the NG Mission Church (for coloureds) was formed by the amalgamation of the two groups, calling themselves the Uniting Reformed Church. He says his congregation has suffered a lot while he has been involved in community work. He has spent time on training church elders, and of course, in helping to ensure Alex's survival.

"The church is not a church for itself, it's a church for others, it has to serve others." And, as proof of this, during the two-hour interview, there's a constant stream of people at the door to see him.

Grey hair

One thing Buti is not modest about is his grey hair. I remarked when I sat with him in the lounge of his modest Alex house that at 69, he still looked youthful, with no grey hair. He responded quickly: "I get rid of the grey, " with a smile.

He met his wife Mary while studying and they were married in Senekal in the Free State. He has four children (but raised his niece with his children) and 10 grandchildren whom he dotes on. He enjoys reading and writing, and is working on his autobiography, progress of which is "very slow".

He loves climbing mountains - he's visited Lesotho to climb mountains there.

His hobbies used to be football and snooker. "I used to be a good soccer player, I was picked to represent Free State, in the team called the Bantus."

He completed his masters degree in theology, at Princeton in the US, critiquing apartheid as heresy, as his thesis. "My theological outlook is liberation theology," he says, "not blacks but people, white or black."

Buti was president of the South African Council of Churches from 1975 to 1981, and in 1984 he obtained membership for the NGKA with the SACC.

Buti's conversation is sprinkled with religious references like "I thank God he has spared me", or "I don't see myself as a leader, I am a servant of the people, a pastor for the folk".

The future

He is still clearly driven to continue working for the community of Alex. He says he gets frustrated at the living conditions of people in the township.

He has just had his business plan for an environmental theme park approved by the city council, a R70-million private investment initiative that involves a waterfront development on the Jukskei River, a recreational area and a community centre. He expects the first brick of the first phase of the project, to be laid early in 2004.

Another project is the opening of a factory in Alex to create jobs for the disabled. Old wheelchairs are being imported from the US and Europe, and at the factory they will be repaired and re-assembled.

He is involved in the Alex Alive Campaign and the Alexandra Book of Personalities. The former has the aim of "bringing a new spirit of revival and reconciliation to the township".

But, in a switch of mood, he says he'd like to retire. "I want to ask my congregation to release me to allow me to retire." He's not too optimistic that they'll agree.

When asked how he would like to be remembered, he recounts a story about a Zulu prince who wanted his name to be remembered by his people. He wrote his name on stones, on trees, and on a mountain.

In time it was decided to build a road through the area - the trees and the mountain were removed, together with his name. He was disappointed and went into the village. He wrote his name on a board and placed it on a big tree in the village square.

But the wind blew over the tree. His father was called. He cut up the tree for wood. He called his son and said: "I realise you'd like your name to be known but don't write it on stones or trees. Write your name in the hearts of people."

Buti stops for a moment, then says: "I would like my name to be written in the hearts of people."

Linda Twala, Alex's philanthropist

By Lucille Davie

IN 1986, at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, the security police threw hand grenades into Alexandra philanthropist Linda Twala's house in 17th Street, and to his horror, he realised that his three teenage daughters were in the house at the time.

He had bought groceries for his mother and loaded them into his bakkie and set out for her house. While there he received a phone call to say his house was under attack and he should go into hiding. He couldn't do this - he had to ascertain that his daughters were safe.

"The house was up in flames, the cars were up in flames. The police had instructed the fire brigade not to put out the fire," he says. There was R12 000 in the house - this was lost. The dog came running out when the police appeared - it was shot dead. To his relief he found that his daughters were safe - they had dashed from the house into the dog's asbestos kennel and had been rescued by neighbours.

Twala had been campaign organiser of the Save Alex Campaign in 1979 (Alexandra was established in 1912 and had been threatened with demolition many times) and was still monitored in the 1980s by the security police. Several prominent Alexandrans had had their houses bombed.

"After the bombing I had nothing to wear. Old ladies brought me shirts," he recalls.



Linda Twala in front of his wall of merit certificates

[source: [Jo'news](#)]

Philanthropist and businessman

Those old ladies meant a lot to Twala, and still do - he's spent his life paying them back and caring for them.

Twala, 59 and well-built with grey flecks at his beard, started his career as Alexandra philanthropist and businessman in the late 1960s by being concerned about old women who died in the township and had no relatives to bury them. He was busy preparing several tombstones for these women when his house was burnt to the ground.

"My house was bombed on Tuesday and we placed the tombstones on their graves on Saturday," he says. Today he owns a funeral company, the Twala Ama Afrika Funeral Directors, and a refuse removal company, Alex Refuse Removals.

Twala is well-known in the township, and certainly well-recognised for his many contributions to the community. And this community is severely impoverished, with an unemployment rate believed to be as high as 60 percent, with most people living in slum conditions, in one-roomed, tin shacks in extremely overcrowded conditions. Some 170 000 (2001 Census: 166 968) people live in this ghetto, in an area of approximately one square mile.

For our interview I park at the Alexandra Clinic where he waits for me. I get into his Chrysler bus and he takes me on a tour of the township. The conversation is frequently interrupted by him answering his cellphone.

He is the grandson of the first residents of Alexandra, Eva and Hey Nxele Mbanjwa, who were originally from KwaZulu-Natal. Hey was the cook of S Papenfus, a wealthy farmer who brought Eva and Hey with him when he moved to the Transvaal. He owned several farms around present-day Alexandra, one of which, Zandfontein, eventually became the township.

The Mbanjwas built a mud hut on Zandfontein, and it acted as a donkey-refreshment station for carts carrying Papenfus' milk from his farm in Midrand to Johannesburg.

The Mbanjwas brought their five-year-old daughter Annie with them when they moved. Annie married Phumuza Twala and they had 10 children. Phumuza was a thatcher and thatched roofs in the white suburbs of Johannesburg. He died in 1971.

Annie lived to see her children grow to adulthood, and more - she buried several of them too. She died in February this year, at the age of 99, and as Alex's most famous resident, her funeral was attended by thousands of people.

Two principles

Linda Twala takes his inspiration from his generous-spirited mother, who brought up her children with two guiding principles: discipline, and the ability, if surprised by a stranger at the door, to give your plate of dinner to that person

without hesitation.

Twala learnt his lessons well. He runs the Phuthaditshaba Care of the Aged Project, started by his mother as a care centre back in the 1960s. It was this building that was bombed by the police in the 1980s, and was rebuilt as the new Phuthaditshaba.

Downstairs mostly women, grey-haired and frail-looking, sit in a row patiently waiting for a meal - some 200 are fed each day. Upstairs, a row of young women, some with toddlers on their laps, sit waiting for medical attention in the satellite clinic. And in a side room, a job creation project sees a group of half a dozen people sitting around a table making plastic wreaths.

And at the end of the year, he holds a Christmas party for the oldies, when over 2 000 people enjoy a special dinner and entertainment.

The project has three sub-communities within it: the elephants or oldies, the lions or middle age folk, and the leopards or youngsters. The lions and leopards do home visits to those oldies who are bedridden, taking them meals. Twala is keen to set up a meals-on-wheels business and is looking at sponsorship for a vehicle.

The Jewish charity organisation, Tikkun, works with Twala. Tikkun has a shack renewal scheme and has so far repaired 160 shacks in the township. Their emergency reaction unit supplies blankets and food when disasters like shack fires occur. They have built a kitchen at Phuthaditshaba.

Galit Cohen of Tikkun describes Twala: "He is the unofficial king of Alex. When you walk the streets with him you feel like royalty - everyone greets him and knows him. People are loyal to him. You can trust everything he says."

Twala continues to play a role in burying destitute people. His funeral directors company takes time out to organise and sponsor funerals for these people.

Housing

Twala has made a contribution to the housing crisis in Alex. An initiative called Habitat for Humanity has built single and double-storey homes, some already unrecognisable, he says, because they have been extended.

Obituary: 'Big Voice' Jack Lerole

by Chris Barron

Penny-whistler par excellence

'Big Voice' Jack Lerole, who has died in Soweto at the age of 63, played the penny whistle like no one else.

In 1998, long past his brilliant prime, he played solo in front of 60 000 Americans at the Foxborough Stadium in Boston and, days later, dazzled 80 000 listeners in the Giants Stadium in New York.

During the height of the penny whistle's popularity from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, Lerole and the more famous Spokes Mashiane were the kings of penny whistle jive, or kwela.

The music Lerole and other township children made from their cheap tin flutes became this country's first and most-successful musical export.

It was a lucrative export, too, for record companies.

In the late-1950s Lerole, his brother Elias and two other penny-whistlers from Alexandra township recorded for EMI an original composition which they called Tomahawk, a reference to the axes wielded by the gangs which roamed the streets of the Johannesburg township.

The song came out in Britain as Tom Hark due to an error by EMI.

EMI brought it out as a single, which proved so popular that it was used as the theme music for the British TV series The Killing Stones. They made £250 000 from the song.

Although it made Lerole famous, he never received a penny in royalties.

Lerole was born in Alex and, like countless other township children, began playing the penny whistle at the age of six or seven. The music they played was heavily influenced by marabi, a mixture of South African rural and Western big-band jazz and swing music, which they heard their older brothers and fathers playing and tried to emulate on cheap tin flutes bought at the nearest mine compound store.

They got their technique from watching Scottish military drum and fife bands playing at Balfour Park next door to Alex. The township children looked on in fascination as the kilted Scots played their flutes sideways.

From observing this, they developed a unique blowing and fingering technique, which allowed them to play more octaves than the two the instruments were designed for. From their experimentation emerged what is arguably the purest music form to have come from SA.

Lerole and other exponents of this new music played it on street corners in the white suburbs of Johannesburg, such as Yeoville, Berea and Hillbrow. White pedestrians who had never heard anything like it tossed these precocious child performers pennies, shillings and even, in the case of truly brilliant talents like Lerole, pounds.

As they played, the township youths kept a sharp lookout for the police, who would arrive suddenly in their vans shouting "Kwela, kwela!" (Zulu for "climb in") and arrest them for creating a public disturbance.

The players would station their friends a block away to give them advance warning so that they could pocket their money, hide their penny whistles and adopt suitably innocent, hands-in-pockets postures.

Their biggest fans were white "ducktails". They protected the young performers from the police, who preferred not to antagonise these intimidating, rough-looking bikers.

It didn't take the talent scouts working for record companies long to spot the potential of Lerole and his fellow artists. They'd be taken to recording studios, where they'd perform their magic for a flat fee of around R3 or R6, depending on whether they recorded one or two sides of a record.

The record companies churned out scores of records this way, cheaply and profitably.

Lerole joined his brother's group called Alexandra Black Mambazo, which recorded under a variety of names in the 1950s and early-1960s for EMI. At the same time he recorded independently under his own name for other companies.

Black Mambazo started as a purely instrumental band but began incorporating vocal routines. This is when Lerole's deep, rasping "goat" voice was heard for the first time.

In 1963 he left Black Mambazo and started making records as "Big Voice Jack" for Teal. Following the lead of Spokes Mashiane, he exchanged his penny whistle for a saxophone, and from then until the 1990s made few recordings on

penny whistle.

The distinctive vocal sound he developed did his vocal chords no good and may even have contributed (along with heavy smoking) to the throat cancer which killed him.

Lerole was one of the first members of Mango Groove in the mid-1980s. He co-wrote and performed a number of the group's tracks, including Dance Some More, on which the low-growling voice is his, along with the penny-whistle playing. Always restless, Lerole drifted away from Mango Groove before they became a household name.

In the mid-1990s, Black Mambazo was brought together again after 30 years for a TV documentary called The Whistlers.

Under Lerole's leadership they performed to an ecstatic audience at the Nantes Festival in France in 1998, but back home couldn't get any gigs.

There were also tensions between the band members, who complained that Lerole was short-changing them, and the band split up, somewhat acrimoniously, for the last time.

In 1997, Lerole began playing at the Bassline Club in Johannesburg, where Dave Matthews invited him to play with the Dave Matthews Band in the US.

On his return, Lerole produced an album called Colours and Moods, and another called Zimanukwenzeka ('Things just happen'), which came out a month ago.

The fees Lerole got for his recordings, regular work for Radio Bantu and performances at weddings and stokvels enabled him to survive as a full-time musician, but not much more than that.

He complained that he was treated "like somebody special" overseas, but in South Africa "like a peasant".

He was married twice. His second wife, Thembi, died two years ago.

He is survived by three children from his first marriage and a step-daughter.

Obituary: Annie Twala

by Chris Barron

From her mud house the mother of Alexandra surveyed a century of political upheavals

Annie Twala, who has died in Johannesburg at the age of 99, was the first and most famous resident of Alexandra, for a long time one of South Africa's most embattled townships.

Twala was born in the village of Mabonvini in Zululand on March 3 1903. Her father, Hey Mbanjwa, worked as a chef for a Mr Papenfus, a wealthy farmer.

When Twala was five, Papenfus moved to Johannesburg, where he owned several farms, bringing Mbanjwa and his family with them.

The Mbanjwas built a mud house for themselves on one of these farms, Zandfontein, 12km north of Johannesburg. The property functioned as a half-way station which supplied fresh donkeys for carts bringing milk from Papenfus's dairy farm in Midrand to Johannesburg.

In 1912, Papenfus divided Zandfontein into plots which he sold to black families. By popular vote this new township was given the name of his wife, Alexandra, who was well liked in the area.

When Twala's parents died, she continued to live in their house. As Alex mushroomed into the most densely populated township in the country, the mud house became something of a landmark. Visitors wanting to know about the history of Alex were invariably steered in her direction. Having experienced it all first-hand, Twala, sitting on her high old sofa, never let them down.



Fighter: Annie Twala with Thabo Mbeki and her son Linda

She was sitting on this sofa when riot policemen raided her house in search of her son Linda, who was in the thick of the political unrest which turned parts of Alex into a war zone in the 1980s.

As the heavily armed policemen turned the house upside down and shot menacing looks at the old lady in her lounge, Twala remained unflinchingly on her sofa, almost daring them to move her. They didn't, which was just as well - underneath the sofa lay their quarry.

Twala was 52 when she helped organise the Alex bus boycott of 1957 after fares were increased.

She mobilised the community behind the boycott and thousands of black commuters walked more than 20km to and from work every day until the fare was lowered to its former rate.

Twala, who worked as a domestic in outlying suburbs, joined the long, trudging lines which set out from Alex as early as 4am and returned well after dark.

The boycott was so successful that the National Party government passed a Bill requiring employers to subsidise bus fares. This was the first Act of Parliament to be passed as a direct result of black pressure.

In the 1960s the government decided Alex should be a dormitory town for migrant mine workers. Black families, many of whom had been in Alex for years and owned the title deeds to their houses, were moved to far-off townships like Soweto, Tembisa and Atteridgeville outside Pretoria.

Twala, her husband Amos - who worked as a thatcher in the wealthy white suburbs adjacent to Alex - and their 10 children were informed that they would be moved to Soweto, but vowed that it would be over their dead bodies.

With Twala very much in the forefront of the resistance, they helped form the Save Alexandra Party which went head to head with the government.

In 1971 Amos died. His last words to his wife were: "Fight on. Don't let them move you."

It wasn't easy. Twala was harassed constantly by police who would bang on her door at 3am, demand to see identification documents and warn her to move out or face going to jail.

Conditions in Alex were made as grim as possible. There were no tarred roads and the dirt roads became barely usable. There were no flush lavatories and no electricity. Alex had long been known as the "Dark City" and it was government policy to keep it unlit so that residents would leave.

The only police in evidence were those battering doors down, if they weren't opened smartly enough, at 3am. While residents stayed inside after dark, gangs roamed with impunity. But still Twala refused to budge from the home her parents had built before Alex existed.

At last, in 1979, the government acknowledged defeat. The then Minister of Community Development, Piet Koornhof, announced that the residents of Alex could stay.

But their lives remained fraught with danger and difficulty. There was a raging battle between police and pro-ANC activists, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s open warfare erupted between migrant workers in the hostels and residents in their houses.

In 1986, three of Twala's grandchildren were lucky to escape with their lives when police threw hand grenades into Linda's home while his children were inside.

Twala took the family in and her home became a regular venue for activists. In spite of the danger this presented for her, Twala's moral support for the activists never wavered. And she was always ready with a slice of bread and jam for those who hadn't eaten.

Though her wages as a domestic worker were meagre, Twala was a born entrepreneur and lost no opportunity to supplement her income. When black people were prohibited from drinking alcohol, she made good money selling gologo (brandy). Police frequently raided her house but were always disappointed because Twala kept her stash buried in the garden.

One day they were leaving after another futile search when Twala's young grandson helpfully led them to the hole. Twala's furious protestations of ignorance kept her out of jail, but it was a long time before she could look at her thoroughly mortified grandson without scowling.

Knowing how much she enjoyed snuff, her daughter Philolo kept Twala well supplied. She was constantly amazed at how quickly the old lady, in her 90s by then, consumed it - until it emerged that she'd been selling it to the neighbours.

However, Twala used every cent she made from her entrepreneurial activities to buy food for her family. This took some doing: two years ago, her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great great-grandchildren numbered 236.