

Downside of being filthy rich

NIVASHNI NAIR

You might have to spend a lot of money on legal costs

IN 2008, Sbu Mpisane was the only Durban metro police constable who arrived at work in a Lamborghini.

It was one of a fleet of supercars parked outside the multimillion-rand mansion he lived in.

When the DA asked how Mpisane could afford a Lamborghini, two Maseratis, a Rolls-Royce and a Ferrari, a R20-million mansion in La Lucia and designer clothes on a gross salary of R15 000, Durban was introduced to the queen of bling, his wife, Shauwn.

Shauwn, the daughter of former anti-apartheid activist Florence Mkhize, stepped into the limelight in bold designer wear and diamond-encrusted jewellery escorted by an entourage of equally lavishly accoutred friends.

After Mpisane resigned from the police, he joined his wife's business — Zikhulise Cleaning, Maintenance and Transport — which had won tenders worth millions of rands from the municipality and the KwaZulu-Natal government.

Their business dealings extend as far back as 1997, when they won a provincial housing department tender. The department later handed the project over to the municipality with the proviso that the couple be retained as contractors.

The Mpisanes have won contracts worth over R300-million despite complaints of shoddy workmanship in the building of low-cost houses in Umlazi, and Shauwn's VAT fraud conviction in 2005.

Despite their legal woes, the couple spared no expense on living large. In March 2011, they spent at least R1-million on two parties — to celebrate Sbu's Mpisane's birthday and their wedding anniversary — treating 180 guests to pricey champagne, sushi and oysters.

The guests included controversial ZAR Lounge owner Kenny Kunene, Durban millionaire Vivian Reddy, socialite Khanyi Mbau and President Jacob Zuma's nephew, Khulubuse Zuma.

Axed national police commissioner Bheki Cele referred to Shauwn Mpisane as his daughter when he sat in court to give her "moral support" at her fraud trial last year.

During the trial, Shauwn Mpisane sat on a new cushion each day and often played with her cocktail rings. Her daring designer outfits — featuring feathers, beads and sometimes big buckled belts — made her the centre of attention but she refused to be photographed. On two occasions when her employees pushed and tried to intimidate photographers in the courtroom, Shauwn watched from a distance.

Her husband later said that his wife did not mind posing for photographs, but at different locations. Shauwn frequently allows photographers to picture her in her extensive designer-wear collection, on her outings to luxury hotels and

on her arrival at social events in helicopters or supercars.

But the Durban Magistrate's Court heard last year that the rising legal fees could wipe out Mpisane's millions.

Advocate Wim Trengove, acting for Mpisane, told the court that if the state continued to request postponements his client would be prejudiced because she would have to spend more on legal fees.

The gallery, made up of Shauwn's employees, agreed. An elderly woman whispered: "She will become poor."

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- Cloudy
- Partly Cloudy
- Cloudy with rain
- Thundershowers
- Snow
- Fog
- Frost

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Cape Town
Sunrise: 06:12
Sunset: 19:47

Durban
Sunrise: 05:29
Sunset: 18:50

Johannesburg
Sunrise: 05:46
Sunset: 18:56

