

'Rogue unit at Arts and Culture'

KZN dept head accused of appointing his 'girlfriends'

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THE KwaZulu-Natal head of Arts and Culture, Ntokozo Chonco, has been accused of maladministration, factionalism and appointing his "girlfriends" to positions they did not qualify for.

The allegations were made in a letter from officials within the department who recently wrote to the MEC for Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation, Hlengiwe Mavimbela, asking for her intervention.

In it Chonco is accused of sowing disunity among staff and perpetuating maladministration through setting up his faction by appointing people who did not meet even minimum requirements for the positions they were given.

The authors of the letter claimed to have witnessed Chonco flouting recruitment processes as his "libido decides who gets rewarded or deployed to various sections of the department".

They said the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) has been populated with "fair skinned" and "flashy" women, which has rendered it ineffective in its functions.

They claimed that Chonco bragged about his relationship with Premier Sihle Zikalala, saying he could remove any staff member from one section to another as he pleased regardless of requirements. "The factional battle lines have been drawn through the rogue unit called Admin Forums. This rogue unit is not even recognised both in Labour Relations (LRA) or the DAC organisational organogram. We're told their pri-

mary objectives is to become 'eyes and ears' for the HoD."

Apparently the department's expanded public works programme (EPWP), which is meant to benefit those living in poverty, is also being abused.

Some of Chonco's alleged "girlfriends" are employed somewhere else yet are masqueraded as DAC employees and are being given a green light to loot the limited resources meant for the poor.

There is also allegedly rampant looting taking place where some consultants are walking away with about R400 000 monthly.

DA KZN spokesperson on Arts and Culture Bradley Singh has submitted a written parliamentary question to Mavimbela, calling on her to urgently provide answers following staff concerns around Chonco.

"It is critical that the MEC intervene — the alternative is that the whole department could collapse. The DA believes that all staff must be treated fairly and the rule of law must apply. The HOD cannot be above the law," he said.

When contacted for comment, Chonco said he was aware of the allegations, however, he could not be the judge and jury over his own matter. He referred *The Witness* to Mavimbela's office.

Arts and Culture spokesperson Phathisa Mfuyo confirmed that Mavimbela received the letter containing allegations against Chonco. She said the matter was receiving attention and the department would communicate in due course as it had to be dealt with internally.

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MEC for Arts and Culture Hlengiwe Mavimbela with the head of department Ntokozo Chonco.