

# Alex La Guma (1925 – 1985)

THE ORDER OF IKHAMANGA IN GOLD (POSTHUMOUS)



**AWARDED TO  
ALEX LA GUMA  
FOR EXCEPTIONAL  
CONTRIBUTION TO  
LITERATURE AND THE  
STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM  
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Alex La Guma was born in 1925 in Cape Town. After graduating from Trafalgar High School in District Six, he joined the Young Communist League in 1947 and became a member of the Communist Party a year later.

He was the Western Cape chairperson of the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) in the 1950s and a national executive member of the SACPO (later named the South African Coloured People's Congress) in the 1960s.

From 1955, La Guma wrote for *New Age*. He was involved in organising the Congress of the People, and in many articles for *Fighting Talk* he captured the atmosphere of the 1956 Treason Trial proceedings. He was placed under 24-hour house arrest in 1962, detained in 1963, and finally went into exile in 1966.

La Guma is considered one of South Africa's major 20th century writers. His first book, *A Walk in the Night* (1962) was followed by *And a Threefold Cord* (1967), *The Stone Country* (1969), *The Fog at the Season's End* (1972) and *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979). He wrote four novels and many short stories. He also edited *Apartheid: A Collection of Writings on South African Racism by South Africans* (1972). In 1969, La Guma received the Lotus Prize for Literature, from the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference.

La Guma was an important South African and African cultural activist and writer, but also an important political figure. He steadfastly held to his ideals despite official harassment, banning and house arrest.

Alex La Guma was chief representative of the ANC in the Caribbean at the time of his death in 1985.