

**Thembekile Cybele Zondi.**  
**Inanda teacher, 1954-1982.**  
**Interviewed in Inanda, 11 October 2008.**

*First of all, what is your full name? When were you born?*

Let me write it down: Thembekile Cybele Zondi. I was born 23 October 1932.

*Were you a student at Inanda as well as teacher?*

No, I came as a teacher.

*When did you come as a teacher?*

1954.

*How did you know of the job at Inanda?*

Well, I was a student training as a teacher at Mariannahill. Miss Scott needed a home economics teacher, so she sent word to our principal, saying that she needs a teacher, so the principal talked to me. In fact, I wanted to go back to my school, where I did my matric. But the principal said I should train at Inanda Seminary because Inanda Seminary is an old institution, and I would need the teaching experience.

*And where did you do your matric?*

At Inkamana—it is a Roman Catholic college. Then I went to Mariannahill for the teachers' diploma. Then when I completed that, I came over to Inanda Seminary.

*How long did you teach at Inanda?*

29 years—from 1954 to 1982.

*So, what was Inanda like when you first arrived?*

Stanwood was there, mission house, industrial school, and I had a room here at Edwards Hall. And then Phelps Hall was there...

*What were your students like when you started?*

Well, they were still the old type of students, they behaved well. We did the usual thing—they were interested in sports, we had basketball, tennis. I trained the basketball team, and I trained the athletics sports team, and we even won a trophy, and I took over church choir after Mrs. Yengwa. When Mrs. Aylard came from America, she was going to specialize in music, and she took over the church choir, and then when she left I went back to my old job. I had my singing group called Amathendele. We would do church choir music and secular music, local songs, Zulu dancing, and things like that. That group was called Amathendele. That came after the Choralaires...

*What sort of changes did you see in the school between 1954 and 1982?*

To tell you the truth, they were the same. But towards the end, when they got the spirit of strikes and things, they wanted to rise up against different things, and there wasn't a serious kind of strike here, really. But influence from here and there, bigger girls trying to be political—but it didn't come to anything, really.

*Can you give me more information about that? What was the strike about?*

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Um, it wasn't really a strike. It was just a little uprising, which I quelched. Mrs. Koza was the principal then, and—what happened? I can't even remember what the uprising was about. Honestly, I don't remember. That's how insignificant it was. My husband joined me in 1966, he came as one of the staff members, and then eventually he became the principal of the school, and at that time funds were really low. They already had those cottages, by the chapel there. It was imperative now, they had to have males, they wanted a male head teacher... They started building cottages for families. That was in the 1960s.

*So you and your family lived on campus here.*

We lived in so many places. I lived in Edwards Hall before I married, then when I got married, Naida Sutch gave up her room in Mission House. And then, where did we go... that was before the cottages were there. From there, I lived in the cottage they built for married teachers, then when my husband left, I moved to the iron shack, and from there, when Dumi came back, we moved to the cottage just below the chapel... I was all over really, that's how long I've been here.

*During your time here, did all of the teachers live on campus?*

Yes. Either you take the job or not. You had to be on campus. It was, I mean, it was a girls' school, you had a job that had to be done, we had to supervise campus care, we had to supervise extracurricular activities, I mean, oh. Lots of things we did. We only had workmen, and the lady who worked in the kitchen [to maintain campus]. Besides, it was too far to travel... and at that time, we didn't even have cars. There was the school car, but the individuals—nobody had a car. Just the school car, which was used by the villagers if somebody was seriously ill, then they came to the mission here to get transport to hospital or to clinic. Sometimes people were bitten by a snake and they had to get rushed to hospital, using the school car... And we had pit toilets until my husband was principal here, so that was another big improvement. And just at the time when the school was about to shut down because of water... a diviner came over to Inanda ... they had tried all these things to find a borehole... The divining branch found the place of the water. So we escaped being shut down. But Ohlange Institute was taken over by the government. The government was very eager to take over the school.

*Right. So when you first came, in 1954, it was up in the air whether Inanda would continue as a private school.*

No, no, Inanda Seminary was a private school, which was government-aided, and it was never taken over really by the government. What else do you want to know?

*I'm curious about Inanda remaining independent during Bantu Education. What difference do you think it made that Inanda was a mission school, in terms of contributions to students' educations?*

Well, being a mission school, it was good for building up morals, you know, these girls had to be—well, the Christianity, their morals were moulded, by the very fact that Inanda was a mission school.

*Did you see a difference also in the quality of education that was being offered to black women here, compared with elsewhere?*

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The very fact that I remained that long was, eh— that we refused to teach Bantu Education. Though we had everything from the Government, we taught them—I mean, the syllabus came from the Government, exams were done by the Government—but, we didn't teach Bantu Education, and we refused to teach in mother tongue, that is Zulu. And we refused to teach some subjects in Afrikaans. Afrikaans was only taught *as* a subject—no subject was taught in Afrikaans, as it had been decided by the Government then, that two subjects must be taught in Afrikaans—we didn't do that. And, em... We taught the syllabus as it was, we never changed anything—we taught the syllabus as it was *before* the Afrikaner government took over.

*So you were using an older syllabus, but the students still had to take the new government's exams.*  
Yes, in the classroom nothing changed really, everything just remained the same.

*Did you see any difference in terms of students' preparedness for school?*

They loved learning, they just did—they were here to get their JC or to get their matric, and when they passed their matric they all wanted to go to university, and fortunately many of them did succeed; many of their parents could send them to university, or to teacher training, or so on. ['To colleges and many of them went to train as nurses at McCord Hospital which was a mission hospital,' she later noted.]

*So did you only teach home economics?*

No, I taught maths, up to Standard 9.

*Do you remember any particular students that you had especially good relationships with, or have kept in touch with?*

That's an American kind of thing, usually.

*An American kind of thing?*

Yes, I mean, they had pets, what we called pets. But when we were training at teacher training colleges, one of the things that was really criticized was to have a pet, so I had students in my class that I'm used to, I had students in the choir—I wouldn't say any one of them was socially close. But people that were closer to me were those that shared the same surname with me, so, those then, I would say, were closer. And the good students of course, or good in sports... I'd be close to kids that I worked with. I mean, the second that you interacted with them more than just being a student in class, I mean, those got closer. But no one single girl would I say was my pet.

*So it seemed like Americans had pets?*

Well, they were champions at having pets. ['Not all—3 or 4 of them,' she later noted.]

*Champions?*

There would be those kids who would like you, who would talk to you, and so on, but I wouldn't take them as pets.

*What do you think were differences in the ways that American missionaries and teachers from South Africa taught?*

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You mean the way they taught in class? I don't know. All I know is that, for instance, when I taught maths, there came two teachers from America, and Miss Scott insisted that before they be given a class of their own, they had to spend two weeks following me, teaching, wherever, you know. That was Miss Garn, and Miss Lois Wilson. So I think she wanted them to see how classes were handled, what maths teaching methods were used, because maths was really low. I must say, with the coming of Miss Garn, maths results began to change. She taught in matric, I taught up to junior levels. I loved teaching maths, in fact. In fact, eventually we talked this over, and said, this industrial school, we don't like it. In fact I didn't like it, I didn't like it, I advocated it being completely done away with. So when we had staff meetings we said, instead of having housecraft—because, when this industrial started, they needed money. I used to hear that they used to take laundry from the neighboring whites to be done here, to get a little money, and students came over from Zululand and Natal because they were told that Inanda Seminary taught dressmaking, but that wasn't true, it was just a subject—dressmaking, housecraft, cooking. When I came over here... Then there was this thing, that students that were not so bright would do domestic science, and good students would take domestic sciences. So we got rid of this industrial school—we introduced accounting.

*And that happened in the early 1970s?*

Uh-huh, maybe accounting came before the secretarial school? During my time, the change that I think was the big change, really, was this accounting. And there was a lady here, Mrs. Monaghan, from Canada. She was a very rich woman. She was left an inheritance.

*And she was a teacher?*

No, she was Miss Scott's friend. Barbara Monaghan. And they had an engine that generated electricity, and as the years went by, we had problems, of course, and she would help fix it... And I said, why don't you write the people in New York, who are in charge, to give us electricity? And Miss Scott almost chopped off my head... then it was Miss Wood, who talked to Miss Scott and said they must write New York... They reply came immediately. They said, go ahead, and install electricity.

*So speaking of relationships between Inanda and the American Board or the US, to what extent were you familiar with what went on in the States?*

Not at all, because I was just a junior teacher. Miss Scott and the missionaries, they communicated with the office. But it was only when I was in Massachusetts and got in touch with members of the Stokes family—they also had a hand in Inanda Seminary. One of the descendents of the Stokes family was at University of Massachusetts. I was one of ten African women that were invited by the American University Women to go over to America and be trained in school administration. See, I went because my husband was principal of the school, so having been here for so long and being a principal's wife—I went for an interview at the American consul in Durban... It was just a small type of diploma in school administration. I left here in 1974 to join those women. So I was talking about this Stokes family. So this descendent of the Stokes family—there was this thing when missionaries were recalled from African states, like Rhodesia, etc.—many of them left, the missionaries who were here in Durban, some of them went back home. But the ones here at Inanda Seminary were still here. This woman, she was such a character, an overpowering type of

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woman—she called me to talk to her... She wanted to know if it is correct to recall the missionaries that were already at Inanda Seminary. I said, not at all. They still work, those missionaries. And it was important because it was a girls' school, and in Africa, the status of a woman is not something that we talk about so much. So we did need the school, a good Christian school... because once they have got matric, they will be encouraged to go to university. She asked me, what do you think about this? I said, I don't know about the other missionaries in Africa, but at Inanda Seminary, we still need these missionaries. She said I must go to New York, and talk to the people [at the United Church Board for World Missions, Inanda's sponsoring mission]. So, I did go there. I don't know how I had all that courage. So they sat me down, they asked questions about the missionaries, should they be sent home, I said not in your life. And the missionaries remained. When they left they left because they just left. Those missionaries in other countries went back home, but those at Inanda remained.

*So why were they going back home from other countries?*

Well, it was decided in Europe—in New York—they didn't think there was any need for missionaries anymore. That was how I understood it.

*So the Aylards were the last missionaries here?*

Yes, then Zondi took over. Mr. Aylard came because Miss Scott was really tired...

[Recorder ran out of batteries—the rest of the transcript was hand-written:] Stanwood Cottage was for white missionaries—they had their own dining room. The dining room in Phelps Hall was for black staff—they [white and black staff] only had morning tea together. They only had morning tea as an integrated staff because there were visitors at that time. There was only integrated afternoon tea when visitors were around. Though things changed... Somebody from Pretoria came here to persuade Miss Scott to influence missionaries to give school over to government—he taught with colleague of Miss Scott at Adams College or he was a colleague of Miss Scott's at some point. They were talking with Miss Scott—she was taking him around—they came to Phelps Hall—she said, 'This is the African staff dining room.' This man said, 'Hawu, so there is an African staff dining room.' But Miss Scott was really for change. When she was on furlough—Charlotte Reid came to take over for her. Some people were upset because she came fresh from America to stay for the year—the Board brought somebody quite neutral to spend a year here. That was the time that Cuba was fighting America, I remember because Reid was on one side of the issue and Naida Sutch was on the other. Staff members were not accepting of Reid because she advocated to end segregation. Many people were against integrating the dining room. Black staff were against it due to talk about expense—if we integrated we'd pay more in boarding, our salaries were going to be affected. Missionaries were supported by the Board with holiday money, pensions, etc., things we didn't have. Do you know that coming fresh from school, having been in Roman Catholic schools—I didn't know anything about money—I didn't know after that teaching I should have a pension. I remember someone saying if the government stopped paying our salaries for us—they used to give us 100% of our salaries from the government—if you don't give up the school they'd cut off 25% of our salaries one year. The following year, 50%, the next 75%, etc. Agnes Munz left over concerns about her pension when she retired.

*So you didn't get a pension from working at Inanda?*

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Only when I joined government schools did I get a pension. Staying here, being secluded, you don't know about some of these things. I didn't think about pensions, insurances. I didn't know about all these things. Later I got an insurance agent who was a crook.

*So you started working at government schools after leaving Inanda?*

I left Inanda in 1982. From 1983 to 1985 I was at Dlangezwa High School, from 1986 to 1992 I was at Umlazi Commercial High School, then I retired, I got a pension from the government.

*Why did you leave Inanda for the government schools?*

I had to leave to join Dumi at University. I didn't leave when he left in 1977 because I couldn't. I was giving the girls private talks that were important and valuable. They had to be *told* about relationships with men, sex—I did that during classes; sometimes I would give up a whole period to talk about these things. The principal didn't know about this. My old students Hixonia Nyasulu and Esther Sangweni were recently revising talks I had with them years ago.