

**Lauretta Ngcobo (née Gwina).**  
**Inanda student, 1945-1949.**  
**Interviewed in Durban, 19 March 2009.**

*To begin with, I've been asking people about their family backgrounds, so can you give me a little information about that, to start out?*

Mmm-hmm. I was born [in 1932] in the bottom part, in the southernmost part of KwaZulu-Natal, just on the border between the Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and it's a very rural area, the little town of Mzimkulu—in fact, I was born on the Ixopo side, which is equally rural, but I always think I was born in Mzimkulu because it was only four miles away, whereas Ixopo was thirteen miles away. So I grew up in a very rural area. So that's where—this area, that's one of the areas where the mining industry drew a lot of people to go and work on the mines, so I've got that experience of immigrants, immigration, people always going away, and women being on their own in the rural areas where I grew up. And that's the kind of place I know. I think I will stop there, with that rural side.

*And your parents? I read that your mother had gone to Inanda Seminary, and your grandmother too.*

Yes—oh, my grandmother came from the Ndwedwe side, I think you are now familiar with the geography there, from the Ndwedwe side, and, em, near Umdloti River, and she married my grandfather, who also lived on the other side of the same river. My grandfather was one of the most adventurous young men perhaps of those times, because he left his big family homestead, and went to Cape Town to work, and to study.

*And when was that?*

Oh, this was—I think, judging by their age—my grandfather was much older than my grandmother—this must have been somewhere in the 1870s.

*Yes, that's very adventurous for that time.*

Yes, it was, really. And that college, which is called Zonnebloem College today, in Cape Town, that's where he went as a young man. And I'm not too sure of the actual level of education he reached, but for those times it was quite high. And at some point—he just had that spirit—at some time he decided to leave Cape Town and to go to Lovedale, and I think the aim was to further his studies, because there was nothing special about Lovedale except its educational system, which I think you know now was about the same time as Inanda and Adams and all those mission establishments, and he went there to further his studies, shall I call it—

*And what was his name?*

His name was Nyoni Cele, yes, my mother's side was Cele, and he was—there is a possibility that he might have been called Nyoni Nyovane, because that name does appear, though it was never used by the family locally, but I think in his adventures he gave himself that name. And so there was no connection at the time, even though the two homesteads are just separated by a big river and a high hill. My grandmother's family—I've been there recently, for the first time—is up on the hill, and my grandfather's is down near the river below, but before he came back, my grandmother, together with a small group of other girls, decided to abscond from home and to go to Inanda to become Christian.

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*Ah, so she was one of the runaways.*

She was.

*And what was her name?*

She was Agnes Cele. At the time—Mdladla.

*That was her name before she married?*

That was her maiden name.

*I'll look for information about her in the records, I'm sure I'll find something. I'll let you know.*

I would be very, very pleased to know about that. She was a student at Inanda—I don't think she went very high, but she did study the home industry and she learned to read and write, and she used to speak some English to us sometimes, which she had gathered from Inanda. And of course she always talked about Inanda Seminary. When her own daughters—at the time, when she moved—she went to Inanda and studied, and I don't know why she decided to leave it, but when she came back from Inanda she was one of the few who were educated, who were familiar with white ways, shall I call them—and I think that's what made the link more easy for my grandfather who had traveled so far for so many years. And fortunately for him she came from a very beautiful family, she was a very pretty woman. And then, by 1896, they got married. Let me show you their picture... Oh no, it's at my other home in Ulundi. It's not here. [She later gave me a copy.]

*Oh, shame.*

Somehow it flashed through my mind. I still have got the picture of them wearing those long Victorian dresses. But my grandfather even then does look much older. Anyway, they then settled at Inanda, near Ohlange, and the Dubes were neighbors, you know, and when they had their own children, right there at Ohlange, my mother in particular, they sent her to Inanda. So my mother studied at Inanda until she was ready to qualify for a teachers' course, and from Inanda she was moved to Edendale, near Pietermaritzburg, a training institution of those times, where she trained as a teacher. So halfway through this period, they moved from Inanda to Mzimkulu. My grandfather, who I think had more money, more substantial money that he had saved, was one of the few men who were able to come together and cooperate in buying a place. There was a farm at Mzimkulu, and this Mr. Webb—I'm so sorry about the noise [construction is noisily underway in the flat above]—and so my grandfather, they moved to go and establish this new place. Just three or four weeks ago I took some American students and their professors to Mzimkulu, to that place, right to the school that was started by my grandfather.

*So when was this? Was this the 1910s, or earlier?*

Yes—to be exact, it was about 1913.

*1913. Okay, so they purchased the farm in 1913, before the Natives Land Act?*

Yes, they purchased the land just before the new laws came in, that disallowed black people to own property. So my grandfather had already built that property, together with a group of ten men. So he had quite a decent farm at Mzimkulu, in a place called Webb's Town. They had bought it from Mr. Webb. In Zulu we call it Cabazi. And so, that's where I grew up. My father,

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when he met with my mother, my mother was already a teacher, and she was teaching in a village near Adams College. My father's history is also rather complicated.

*Your father was Xhosa?*

Yes, my father came from the Cape, and he was the last born of a large family of eight, and his parents were dead, but his eldest brother brought him up. His eldest brother was an evangelist, and he wanted him to be educated too. So he took his youngest brother and went and trained him—there was a training college—not a teachers' training college, but for the artisans, what do you call it—he took him to this school that was not very far from Adams College and that's where my father studied.

*And do you remember the name of that school?*

They call it Endwaleni. That's where he studied, he was good at carpentry. And at that point, unfortunately, because they used to travel long distances on horseback between the Cape and Endwaleni, on one occasion he was taking him back to school, and unfortunately it was wet, and there was no way of him getting warmer, or changing, he had to get right back to where he comes from, and unfortunately his brother caught pneumonia on that trip, and he died. So my father was left alone. You know, out of a family of eight, the only person he can account for was his sister, who got married and left home and was never seen again—the uncle's wife moved off to her own people at Mpongweni—my father then found it very difficult to follow his brother's wife, although the brother's wife was fair enough, she wrote to tell him that though his brother had died he had left a lot of property, cattle, sheep, and goats, that is, and they are all yours, Simon, when you are ready—I have taken them to my people, when you are ready you can come back and claim them. But my father, at that time, being a young man, there has always been this pride of men not to follow the female side, you know, particularly seeing as she wasn't a relative really, so instead of going back—he didn't know what he was going to do—he decided he was going to use some of the furniture he had made at school, sell it, and go to Adams, to teach and to train as a teacher. So my father trained at Adams College as a teacher, and while he was teaching there, at a small school called Madumdumbe, at Adams, near Adams College, my father met my mother. They were teaching in the same school. Then they decided to go and get married, and he followed my mother to her people, he paid all the dues, and then my grandfather said, 'Seeing as your story is incredible, I have never seen a man on his own without family or anything, what would you say if I gave you a plot over there, so that you can settle with your wife and have a base?' And so that's how my mother settled on her father's farm, and we had a little plot there, and that's where I was born, and there were four of us [siblings] in the end. But my father fell ill. He was teaching here in Greytown and he taught TB, and so he was in Pietermaritzburg Hospital for a long time, and my mother came and picked him up and took him home. By this time I was age six, when my father came home as an invalid, and it was at the time when my third brother—it was myself, my mother, my sister, my brother, and then in the years when my father was ill, they got a fourth son. Then my father died when this son was three months old. So I just know my father in that distant way, we were brought up by my mother—in fact, just last week, for the first time in very many years, I went to that hospital where my father died, and wandered and looked around and said I wondered where my father's grave was—but we never came to know—my sister was here last week, and we went over the whole thing as we saw it as children, and we thought *how lonely*—and

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it struck me for the first time, how lonely my mother must have been, because her people could not come all the way to Ixopo, to where he was ill, to Christ the King Hospital, they couldn't come for his funeral, and so she took my sister and me, and my grandfather hired a car, and just us—we just went to that funeral in Ixopo. It just hit me last week—I was so, so upset. Anyway. That's where my father lies. And then my mother came back, and then fortunately, within a couple of weeks, there was a teacher required in the local school. And she became a teacher in that school. And I had the misfortune of being taught by my mother, throughout my primary schooling! [Laughs.]

*[Laughs.] And what was your mother's name?*

Her name is Rosa, Rose Cele. So she was very strong. She went through so much hardship, but she was very determined. I think her father had somehow preached to her, or got it into her mind, that it was very important to educate children, and that it didn't matter if they were girls or boys. Because incidentally, my mother, and her own family, was the only one who actually went so far as qualifying as a teacher. They all went to school, they all went so far as Standard Six, Standard Seven, but none of them became teachers. So my mother, although she was a girl, although she was preceded by two brothers, was the only one who became a teacher in her family. And so I grew up under those very difficult circumstances at home, my mother pulling hard and me doing my bit not to disappoint her. And, as always, when I got to a certain stage, there was no question where to go for my high school, but Inanda. I went to Inanda, and—

*What year did you start there?*

Inanda I started in 1946. I remember it well, the first day.

*What do you remember about the first day?*

The first day, it rained so hard from Durban to Inanda, and by the time we got near that police station, which we called Mjebeni, the bus couldn't go on, and we had to get off the bus, and carry our boxes, and that mud! Ooh, that mud! Anyway, it's memorable, but I suppose as a child, there's so much you're ready to do for a new adventure. And we went through and walked to Inanda. And of course it was a very cosy place. It was very excluded. For me, last week [at the school's 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations] it was amazing to see men all around Inanda. There were just no men at all! And so, I had a very good time. Fortunately, I didn't find my studies difficult. I got on very well, I was always in the A-stream, and I became very religious, very religious. There was a lady there called Ms. Blansom. She was English, she was not American, but she was very religious. And she influenced me a great deal. And she liked me because I was doing well in her maths, and in everything she did, and in botany, and all that, and I got on well with her. Then—then, ehm, I won't go too far, because the story will be too long, but I remember well that year—towards the end of my—no, before that—when I reached Standard 9, what we called Junior Certificate, my mother said to me, 'You are going to have to go to Mariannhill for teacher training.' Unfortunately Miss Blansom just wouldn't hear of it, Miss Blansom refused and said, 'No, no, no, you are not going to go there, you are going to come back to Inanda, you are going to finish your matric at Inanda.' I kept—the argument was, if I go to Inanda and I pass my matric, what do I do next? Because there was no profession. Eh, and so, without me knowing, there was a great dialogue in letters going on between Miss Blansom and my mother. I went home for my

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holiday, I passed my JC, I was preparing to go to Mariannhill, I went to Mariannhill, and in April, at Easter, I was called by the senior sister, and she told me, ‘Your mother has written me a letter and told me you have to go back to Inanda.’ And I didn’t know about this dialogue at all, and I got such a shock, I couldn’t believe it... But she showed me the letter, and there was my mother’s handwriting. And indeed, in utter confusion, instead of spending a happy weekend with the others at Mariannhill, I was off to Inanda.

*And that was in 1949?*

That was 1948.

*I think that was one of the first matric classes.*

Not too long before, but we definitely weren’t the first class. And I did very well, though I fell ill that year; I think it was a psychological disturbance, I had lost somebody, a cousin of mine, very suddenly, and I was very upset about it. I just developed a funny illness. I had to actually go home from February to June [1949]. Then in June I came back, and by that time I had given up all hope—Miss Blansom was away on her leave—there wasn’t even anybody there to discuss this terrible issue. My mother said, ‘Just go on, there is nothing I can do, just go on, just go on.’ And, now this was the last year, 1949—‘There is nothing I can do now, you are already doing this matric,’ and so on and so forth, and so I went on, and I didn’t have much confidence in what I was doing, that I would pass—and what? So, to cut a long story short, the end of the year came and I went home, I waited for the results. And the results came, and I had done very well, and we were very, very excited about it. But—what to do next?

*Right, so what did you decide to do?*

The first day was absolute euphoria. The next day we were both [she and her mother] avoiding each other’s looks. I didn’t know whether to cry or scream, or—I just didn’t know what to do, and my mother was in the same position. I remember I even asked her to go to a certain family I knew who didn’t live very far, who were very far off, and they had a son who was doing medicine, the first man to go to university in my area. I said, ‘Couldn’t he assist us?’ My mother said, ‘Oh my child, you talk like a child.’ And we sat down, and we just—you know, it was one of the tensest times of our lives together. When on the fourth day, I received a letter from Pietermaritzburg—Pietermaritzburg used to be the headquarters for education—I had received a bursary. And for four years I would go to Fort Hare, and that was a miracle. True miracle. Cause, as I said—well, I don’t think I was telling you—I was very bright, but I was not the brightest. We had one or two other girls who were very, very bright. My closest friend Muriel was the brightest of us all. I could understand her getting a scholarship. For me to get a scholarship, I couldn’t believe that!

*So how did you get it? Did you teachers apply for you to get it?*

I don’t know. I have thought about it a lot of times, whether Miss Scott made recommendations, because there were three of us, four of us who got the scholarship—my friend, as I said, Muriel, Nomthandazo Shezi, and myself, who was the other one? But definitely the three of us got the scholarship to further our studies and go to Fort Hare, and that’s how I got to go to Fort Hare. I did well in the end, but the first year was a disaster so much because I failed, I didn’t pass well—but university life was such an eye-opener; I was in another world. I had come from Inanda which

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shepherded us, you know, through everything, and we depended so much on our teachers. And getting to university, where nobody cared who you were—what you did was your business. And we were so conscious of the boys, so conscious!

*I was going to ask you about that.*

[In high-pitched voice.] The boys, we didn't even want to sit next to them in class! We were so nervous sitting next to them, we were looking the other way! [Back to normal voice] That was a difficult time. And then, in the end, to cut it short again, I—you know, my first year, let me tell you a bit about my first year. What interested me most in my first year was—there were what they called 'societies,' almost every faculty had a society, you know, History—where the students themselves organized themselves and invited guests from all over and they debated subjects and, you know, they did everything. I will never forget how penetrated my mind was by these discussions. I was meeting intellectuals for the first time. It was a most exhilarating time. There wasn't an evening I didn't even go out. We lived so well, honestly. Then suddenly exams came. I honestly jumped. I wasn't ready for them. I started studying day and night! Fortunately, I did pass, I just made it, honestly. My second year wasn't bad at all, and then my third year—right up to my UED, University Education Diploma, which was a professional certificate—and then I left my studies and went off to start teaching. Well, I think that's the part you were interested in, because after that I went on with life, and learned a lot of lessons, and bruised my nose here, there, and everywhere. I did—I then decided to go—I had done psychology at university, I was very keen on psychology, and then there was a job being offered by the CSIR, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, which is a big organization for just about all the sciences, and I applied for that job and I got it, and I left KwaZulu's cushion, the little cocoon, and it was in Pretoria. And to this day, we still dread Gauteng—Pretoria, Johannesburg, those places, but I managed, I went there, I worked for a few years. Then in 19—what year was that, I got married—1957, I got married—it was in 1955 that I went to Pretoria, I didn't like my jobs very much. Actually I enjoyed the science part, but what made it painful and difficult is that I was coming, for the first time, in contact with different whites, with Afrikaners, and...

*What was your job there?*

Research, we were doing research in different fields, mine was for personnel research... I stayed there for about four, or five years—my job there was research into black children's behavior and development. But really, the main thing was racism—I came face to face with racism, avoidance, and all the pain of it, which I hadn't really experienced before, on a personal level—you know, having grown up in the rural areas where there were no whites, and the few whites who were in Umzimkulu, they were business people, interested in the rural people's money, and some of them were my grandfather's friends, so to say.

*When did your grandfather die?*

My grandfather—oh, let me come to that. When I was at Fort Hare, my first holiday from Fort Hare, I spent—beautiful memories—with my grandfather. Because no one in my part of the world had ever gone as far as Lovedale, as far as Fort Hare, and my grandfather had worked with Mr. Stewart, he was his carriage driver, and my grandfather was asking me all sorts of questions. I spent that July holiday virtually all with my grandfather, he was very old at that time.

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*Yeah, about when was he born?*

That was 1950, and he was very old, but he was very sharp-witted, to say, ‘You are the only one of my children.’ And later I was really, truly—up to this moment, none of them have really covered the spaces where my grandfather was. Because I have really gone to see Zonnebloem College, way back in Cape Town, so you know, there was a lot for us to talk about, there were a lot of questions about that first year. And so in July 1950 I was home, and the first of October that year, my grandfather died. I was away. But that was the end of one generation.

*So your mother and your siblings stayed on the farm?*

Yes, we all continued living there. And my mother changed schools here and there, but really she remained in one place, and she was very proud when I finally finished at Fort Hare. I was the first young woman in that rural area to go to university. Even this last year, these last few weeks, the day I took these Americans from Furman—I met a couple of people that I knew, much older people, same as me, who remembered all the details, all the general excitement in my area when I went to Fort Hare, and this woman was saying, ‘I can never forget you.’ Because, you know, I was a first, a first in my area. And so—then of course, at the end of my years in Pretoria, I got married to A.B. Ngcobo, and I came back to KwaZulu-Natal—his home was here in Durban—and partly in Swaziland—but before that, A.B. had gotten himself so involved in politics. That was when I became a real politician myself. There was a lot of preparation for this stage of my life. While I was at university I met one particular young man who was very well read, and who influenced me to read a lot. I mean, I had read a lot of books when I was at Inanda, but you know, they were Inanda books, but now I was reading books about my country—and if you connect the years, this was after 1948, this was 1950, and the Afrikaner had come into power, we were all politicized—’49, ’50, I was at Fort Hare, I was listening to all these students approaching everything—I got my political education at Fort Hare, and after that I met this young man and he influenced a lot about my reading. I read a lot about America, the American problem, you can imagine, I was drifting away from that very religious girl, not because I didn’t believe anymore, but there were questions of politics. When you first learn what is happening to you—you and your people, here and elsewhere—your mind opens up, and you’re almost vulnerable. Anyway, some of my heroes were very American. Even Malcolm X. I did so much reading at that time. Which stopped, more or less, when I began to have a family, and my husband was getting more and more involved in politics, was getting himself into prison and so on. So, from that time—that was a very significant time in my life, because I was beginning to see the world for what it was. I was even flexing my own little muscles as to what I could do. So my husband’s imprisonment really hit me, and the reading I was doing, and the conversations, the meetings—so when it finally happened, that my husband went into prison—

*When was that exactly?*

This was 1960. The uprising of 1960.

*After Sharpeville.*

Yes, because my husband was involved in the uprising at Sharpeville.

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*He was in the PAC.*

Yes, he was in the PAC, and was involved, and I couldn't help but be involved. I didn't go to prison; I was more an underground worker, so to speak. But I went on with teaching, and in 1960, 61, 62—but 1962, the whole country was aflame, really. Just about everybody I knew was in prison or had decided to leave the country, and one day, my friend came to tell me late in the night that they were picking me up the next morning, to leave the next day. And it was a great decision at that time, because I had two children—there were three children, oh, there was a boy, but I don't want to go into that long story, I will leave it aside completely. But he was being brought up by my aunt, and the other two children were—it *happened*, as things will happen, as God plans. I was happily teaching, my husband was in jail, I was comfortable at that period, there was no upheaval happening to me, although the whole country was in a ferment. But, then suddenly one day, the young girl who was looking after my children went to go for a brief space to visit her mother... and then the following week, she didn't come back... I was in a tight spot. And by the following weekend I decided to leave my children with my mother... I came back, and that night, when I was going to sleep and my mind was whirling, I heard a knock at the door. And in an angry voice I said, 'Who are you, what do you want?' And who should answer but my cousin's husband... There were two young men. They came and told me that this old friend who used to work with me... they told me that she had been talking—well, you don't know what a network develops under these circumstances—one of her friends, a fellow teacher, had gone and told her, that they [the police] were coming to pick me up. They had been trying so hard to catch me, but there just wasn't anything I was connected with that was underground. And then apparently they had gone to a certain young man's place—he was my husband's friend—and I had been to Pretoria to see my husband in jail, I came back, I had a little message, an innocuous little message for him, and I wrote to this young man and said, 'A.B. said this...' Because of my handwriting, and all the handwriting they picked up in the school—that had visited the school, they were interviewing all the children in the school and asking them questions, asking about me and how I taught and what I taught and whatnot—they linked this handwriting back to me. And in that way, now, they knew that I was the person they were looking for; they knew I was A.B.'s wife and I was passing messages on to other people. And they were coming for me. I spent that night—in fact, I'm trying to write about it, because I, what I've decided, although I don't know if it's going to succeed, I'm starting to lose hope—is to collect an anthology of writing my women who went into exile. There's a large crowd of us who went into exile, and a lot of us are in politics now.

*And a lot of you went to Inanda Seminary, too.*

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Nozizwe Madlala, and even the speaker [Baleka Mbete], though those came after me—but I know they are Inanda girls. [Interrupted by phone call from another PAC exile, organizing a symposium on Robben Island. We then discuss women in exile project.] The thing is, when we came back from the long years in exile—when we left, we were very young. Very young, you know. And when we finally came back, we were this age. And it was a difficult history. A history that is not straightforward, and I was thinking that the public in South Africa would be curious about the women.

*Yeah, I can't think of a good historical source.*

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There is nothing! Even the ones who are actually in Parliament, all the greats! So I thought of writing about my own life. But I thought, since these people are not showing any interest at all, it would just be one more book, another person puffing away. I thought an anthology would have a real [her son comes in, some talk with him]—and so, it upset me when I arrived back, not even my family. Sometimes I will drop something in conversation, and they will say, ‘What?!’ and I will say, ‘That’s what you never asked me about!’ And so I felt in the end that the only way to leave any trace of what has happened is for us to write, to leave a record of our experiences—even if it’s not in politics, how do we cope? You walk out into the jungle, in Botswana, you’re in the wild, with lions, you know, roaring around, and women were there, you know, with babies and everything, and they stuck it! Just about through every country and every culture we’ve been in. And nobody wants to know. Then I had an idea—I spoke to a few of them, and they showed a great interest. But I’m too old now to do it myself—I’ve done most of the research about who they are, I’ve been in touch with them, but I need some resources. And with our exile, we didn’t have resources, you know. Some people are talking about people in Parliament having a lot of money. When you come back at sixty and you left when you were twenty, they don’t count this gap! These people are desperate to establish themselves, to find a house, to find a wife, to find a what! So I depended very much on the government, and I did write to the local Parliament, the local legislature [about the book project]... [Having difficulty getting government resources for the project. Talks about tensions between exiles and people who stayed in the country. She has even approached Pallo Jordan. Has been waiting for past 18 months. We chat about this for awhile. She then talks about challenges of teaching science in South Africa, how she wants to contribute the experience she accumulated as a teacher in England to South African teachers.]

*Did you feel, when you were at Inanda Seminary, that there was any sort of political consciousness amongst students there?*

As I say, there wasn’t much politics, because I was so cushioned. There was a time, though, when Miss Scott, in particular, would give us talks on important things that were happening around the country, especially when the Afrikaner came in. She did open up our minds into the world that was changing, and I can’t tell a lie and say they preached to us about the politics of South Africa, no, but she was anxious that matric girls at least understood the world as it was changing at that point. It was 1948 when the Afrikaner came in, I remember her talk on the Afrikaner, and I remember her talk in 1949—yes, Miss Scott—the others didn’t do it, but she would do it in the dining room, where we used to meet for assembly. And she brought a few people to us—she used to awaken us to what was expected in us. For instance, I remember she brought a young woman doctor, the first African woman doctor, she spoke to us, and she [Scott] used to bring national figures of the time, like Chief Luthuli, that’s when he could still move around, and yeah. We got—and I remember Alan Paton—and of course she used to involve the Zulu royal family, I remember when I first saw the father of this ruling king, he was coming from Adams I think at that time, and he was being called to become a king. And you know, those talks, when you link them up with the stories you hear at home—we were absolutely, we had never been face to face with these situations, but we knew that life as it had been lived before was changing fast, for the worse. And so they conscientized us really, I remember well. And of course this was way before there were problems in the country.

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*Overall, how do you feel that your Inanda Seminary education prepared you for what you encountered in your life?*

Oh, well, I knew that, from a very early age, from my mother and my grandmother—we all thought that our children would go to Inanda. My cousins went to Inanda. It was, from a moral—Inanda was a moral centre in our upbringing. Yes, religious, too, but it all gelled into a very upward-looking type of centre where we knew that Inanda was a very important centre for development of ourselves, and for the country. Of course, Inanda encouraged a lot of leadership qualities among us—you know, just after the second or third year at Inanda, once you went to JC, there was a lot of responsibility. And of course, as I said, they protected us very well. Life has always been rough in South Africa, especially city life; it is true I came from the rural areas, but we knew even in those days that city life was difficult. We knew that we were well-protected at Inanda, and we appreciated it. That's why you'll find that most Inanda girls always go back to Inanda for something—teaching, functions, everything... Inanda, you know, went far beyond school in our minds, in our lives. It was—moral training was so high. People would almost comment when you said you came from Inanda—oh, no, it shows. I know that Inanda contributed so much. I was lucky to be one of the people who got the red-letter Bible. Really, I don't think I would be the woman I am if I hadn't gone to Inanda. It trained us in outlook, in debates, in ideas. Even children who hadn't grown up in cities and learned a lot of wisdom from the streets came to know a lot about city life. And of course reading, there were books—even if they were faraway books—I remember I read a lot of women's books at Inanda—Montgomery of Canada, Louisa Alcott, I read a lot of that kind of book... I still frown on things that I learned to frown on in those days... That's what made me the woman I am. And I have enjoyed positions of leadership where I've been. I ended up in London, and even though I was the only black among a staff of about fifteen, I became the deputy head of a white school, of a school, and I ended up as the head teacher of that same school by the time I retired. I don't know if I have any pictures of that; let me go see. [She goes to fetch her photo album: Includes photo of Thabo Mbeki, her friend Zanele Mbeki, and Ngcobo's daughter, lots of family photos, etc.]

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*Notes*

James Stewart, *Lovedale: Past and Present, A Register of Two Thousand Names* (Alice: Lovedale Mission Press, 1887), 296.

'Nyovane, Nyoni.

Nyoni Nyovane from Verulam, Natal came here in January 1885. He began work as a groom and driver to Dr. Gordon in Durban. Afterwards he left Natal and came to Cape Town in search of work. He was employed there as a driver for some time and saved a little money in order to obtain some education. He was sent to Lovedale through the friendly interest of Miss Lloyd, sister-in-law of the late Dr. Bleek. He has passed through the First, and is now attending the Second Year's Class. He supports himself by working as a groom and driver to Dr. Stewart.'

[Ngcobo provided me with a photograph of Agnes Mdladla Cele and Nyoni Cele. This photo, taken during their engagement in the 1890s, was encircled by dried leaves from a lime tree in London; her daughter framed it for Ngcobo when her family was in exile.]

**Lauretta Ngcobo (née Gwina).**  
**Inanda student, 1945-1949.**  
**Interviewed in Durban, 19 March 2009.**