

**Cecilia Khuzwayo (née Mvelase).**  
**Inanda student, 1966–1970.**  
**Interviewed via phone from Johannesburg, 7 December 2008.**

*When and where were you born?*

I was born in 1951, and my maiden name was Mvelase. I was born in Johannesburg, in town [Orlando West].

*Why did your family decide to send you to Inanda Seminary?*

A member—one girl who was a member of our church—went to the school two years ahead of me, and when she came back from the school, she was telling us all these wonderful stories, so I developed an interest.

*And what sort of stories did she tell you?*

Ehm... she was telling us about the school and the songs they were singing, and the fact that it was a boarding school, and the fact that it was a girls-only boarding school—ooh, and the fact that they had American teachers. That was a factor for me, yeah.

*Was it an American Board Church that you attended in Johannesburg?*

No, our church, I was an Anglican. But she had a mother who was a teacher, so obviously her mother had known about the girls school, and the fact that it grows leaders, so she sent her daughter to the school, and I just liked the stories she was telling, so I told that daughter that I want to go to the same school.

*Do you remember the girl's name?*

Yes, it was Nthathi Seng.

*What were your first impressions of Inanda?*

It was a lovely place. When I came, coming from a town—coming from Soweto—and the school was in a rural environment—I was a little bit shocked because we had grass mattresses and cold water, and it was a bit of a culture shock, but I enjoyed the company of girls, I enjoyed the company.

*You were there from 1966 to 1970. What were some of the most memorable connections that you made with other students, teachers, and staff members there during that time?*

For me it was—the, the, eh, eh—just before, remember, I was living in a land where whites were separate from blacks. So the fact that we had a white principal who was a woman, and the fact that we had these white teachers, also teaching us. And the school in fact rated very highly in terms of the quality of education.

*What was the curriculum like when you were there? What subjects did you take?*

There was a standard group of subjects to take. I took mathematics, science, the three languages and history.

*To your knowledge, how did Inanda compare with other high schools in South Africa at that time?*

It was one of the best schools in the land. Really, that's what persuaded my parents to send me there. Because when I said I wanted to go to the school, when they heard about the fees, they said, 'Oh, we can't afford this,' but because of the good results that the school was getting they, they, yeah.

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*What difference do you think its status as a private school, as an all-girls school made—what were the factors that you think made Inanda a good school?*

It was the quality of the teachers. It was also—I think, the Christian religion had something to do with it, because the values that it espoused, we always had to work hard, we always had to shine where we were, honesty—there was a spirit of—most of us at that school somehow were bright. I think that they selected very carefully in terms of the results. So the average girl that went to Inanda was very bright, and we were competing—at a very high level of competition.

*Yeah, it seems that it was very competitive to get in throughout the 1960s. What was the procedure for getting in? Did you have to take exams to qualify?*

I had to apply and submit my—and that stage it was Standard 6 results. So we would apply in April, and then use your June results to send to the school. You also had to have a testimonial from a teacher, and depending on the quality of the testimonial you could be let in or not.

*And where did you go to school before Inanda?*

I went to a school in Soweto called Emthogweni Primary School.

*And that was a public school?*

Yes, it was a public school.

*What were some of the differences you saw between your public school and Inanda?*

Ehm... the level of competition was much higher at Inanda. At my primary school, I was I think amongst the top 5, in terms of the brightness. And when I got to Inanda, yo!, I was one of the top 30, not top 5. The competition was intense. There was also a difference. At Inanda we spoke English. At my old school the teachers were African and they could talk to us in Zulu.

*At Inanda, did the leadership transition between Lavinia Scott and Roger Aylard make a difference?*

Yes, there were some differences. His style was very different from Lavinia Scott's style. One of the things that Lavinia Scott used to do—she knew every girl in the school by name. Roger Aylard tried to emulate that, but yeah, it wasn't that strong. And she took particular interest in girls. She knew those that had certain qualities, and she would follow up on those qualities. And if you were naughty, she made it—she found out, and she followed up on your naughtiness, why you are naughty. And she would—if you were getting a lot of marks—because we got marks if we were naughty—and your name was appearing, she would sit down with you, and try to counsel you. You know, she had a famous phrase—'I forgive you for this, but I think I have to punish you for this.' And we never understood that. She would say, 'I forgive you for that, but now I have to punish you.'

[Here Skype fails and I call her back on my cell phone; no recording exists]

I think that the difference between Roger Aylard and Lavinia Scott was that he had a family; she had no family here, so we sort of became her family. That made a big difference; she had a more personal touch. Anyway, I was in my final year when Roger Aylard came, finishing off. I missed the personal touch of Miss Scott and was not happy with certain aspects of his management, but I had exams to take. Anyway, the Standard 8-10 teachers had not changed.

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*Can you tell me about some especially influential teachers?*

Carol Gunn was my maths teacher—she was really prolific at maths. She made me believe that I could get an A in maths. And our science teacher Zindlovu Jiya, he was a male and we made such jokes with him. He was very patient. I took the physical science course, and we got A's and B's. All nine of us, he was so excited. He simplified science, blew out all the myths of science being a difficult subject. Then there was Carohn Cornell, our English teacher. Or was it History? No, it was English. She was not only an English teacher; she also expanded our world. She came from a liberal environment in Cape Town and was quite open to discussing political systems. We would learn about how Parliament works and debates in politics. Then there was Govindsamy Reddy, our history teacher. I think he was a member of the ANC because he went into exile later. He taught us about who we were as Africans and instilled in us our faith in who we were. The American missionaries and the South African staff both made us believe in who we are. They taught me that God made me a human being equal to any other human being made in this world, I am made in God's image, therefore I cannot be less than anyone. When they said 'Black man, you are on your own,' that fitted in very nicely with the teachings I had at Inanda that I am made in the image of God, so I am equal to anyone. When I left Inanda I went to the University of Zululand [where she attained a Bachelor's of Commerce], that's where I found people talking about black consciousness, people saying you have rights, the fact that you were denied rights does not make you less than white people. In fact I had very conservative lecturers at University of Zululand, but Inanda made a difference—at Inanda they told me nothing is difficult, if I put my head to it, so I did not believe that Economics was difficult. I was a member of SASO, and also a member of a local political group that met every Wednesday where we would teach each other about what was happening in the rest of Africa. We realized that we were being cut off from the rest of the world.

*You mentioned that your history teacher went into exile—about how many of your teachers and classmates at Inanda went into political exile, as far as you know?*

People that I knew who went into exile were Catherine Mohlakoane, Govindsamy Reddy, and Baleka Mbethe.

*So were you involved in any political activities during high school?*

No, that was after I left high school. But once I went to Inanda, nobody could tell me I'm inferior because I'm black, and I was not willing to take any nonsense from anyone in terms of logic. I had a number of spates with some policemen—you had to toe their line. If you were around in a place where policemen did not want you to be, they would give you trouble. I would engage them logically, I would say, 'Why do you want me to move away from this place, I am waiting for a bus,' or whatever the case was... I always engaged the policemen, always wanted to engage the logic behind their do/ don't structure, yeah.

*And how would you say Inanda shaped your educational and life trajectory from University on?*

Ehh... well, the commercial sector was something I had been pursuing since I was a little girl. Since I was eleven years old I had an aspiration to be an African manager, because I saw that there were not many. It was difficult for me in Zululand. We had reached a climax at Inanda; when we went to Zululand we took a dive. The education there wasn't as good as at Inanda; the lecturers came out of Bantu Education schools, and the attitude of the professor was that we were going to fail Economics; his attitude was, 'We are going to fail this girl.' After University of Zululand I worked in finance

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with Anglo-American, then at Unilever in product management [for ten years, becoming Senior Brand Manager]. But I left marketing because I felt that my call was in working with people and people's issues. This is where career counseling would have helped me. I found my way at Unilever, then went on to run two NGOs. SASO had been banned, our leaders had left the country, we were all in shells and scared. I was also married, and attending to marriage and children. But we were still organizing. We wanted to keep alive the spirit of, 'You are equal, you are in the image of God, black man, you are on your own.' So I formed an NGO helping young matriculants to go into maths and science, to be engineers, for three years [Thembanani Trust]. Then I had an offer to run an ANC organization admitting exiles, which I ran for four years, 1992–1995. After 1994, all the people that were our sponsors wanted to put money into RDP. Then I went back into human resources for five years [as Human Resources Development Manager at Tongaat Hullet]. There I found my niche, developing people, working with young engineers from varsity, and helping them to be holistic managers. A number of engineers have said to me that they were able to relate to the business world because of the interventions I made in their lives. Then I was in HR for SABC [as Human Resources Executive Director for three years, then as Acting Group CEO for nine months], helping people grow to their best, helping journalists cultivate their careers; there were two that I sent overseas for training, and I also facilitated two blind people being trained as journalists. At Thembanani Trust I was bringing engineers, etc. to rural schools, running workshops. I had one very graceful moment, when someone I had taught in one of these workshops recognized me in the SAA lounge. Now, as a coach [as Managing Director of her own company, Leaders Executive Coaching Services (since July 2007)], again I'm still developing people—again, you can still see the thread of wanting to develop people—I'm coaching people at Vodacom, and one man says to me, 'My boss says he knows you'—I had trained his boss! What the American missionaries did for me, I'm paying back, helping other people to reach their highest in their own development. Now I'm also sponsoring a young girl in Standard 8 at Inanda.

*How many children do you have, and have any attended Inanda Seminary?*

I have three daughters. None of them went to Inanda. When their turn to go to high school came Inanda was going through a bad time so I sent them to other private schools who had a strong Christian base.

*Sorry, I forgot to ask—What were your parents' backgrounds, education levels, and occupations?*

My parents were semi literate. My mother was a domestic servant and my dad a bus driver. My brother, who later became my mentor, was an HR officer in a construction company. He is the person who bought into my dream to attend high school at Inanda and paid my fees for the first three years.