

Khanyisile Kweyama.
Inanda Seminary student, 1976-1980.
Interviewed in Johannesburg, 29 May 2010.
Note: No audio transcript exists, as my recorder malfunctioned.

Where were you born and what was your married name?

My married name is Khanyile--I use my maiden name, Kweyana. I was born in Pretoria, Atteridgeville township. But my father was from the South Coast of Natal, and he had been to Adams or Amanzimtoti, I'm sure you've heard of it. So when it was time for us to go to high school, that's where we went--Natal. His parents were still in Natal, so we spent every holiday in Natal, long weekends in Natal. It was like we had dual citizenship. My eldest brother went to Adams, and my sister went to Inanda. My other sister went to another school in Natal.

Was that Mariannhill?

No, it was just a local school, not a boarding school.

So your brother went to Adams after it had been taken over by the government, and your father went to Adams when it was an independent mission school. Did they note any differences between their experiences at Adams?

No, for my parents, it was more that it was his alma mater. Even at that time, I didn't think of it much as being a government school versus private. The boarding schools had a feeling of being private, even if they were run by the government. For my parents, most importantly, Inanda Seminary was a girls' school, and it had a reputation that it was an excellent school. The so-called white schools were not an option at the time I went to school. My younger brother, I think, was the first black child to go to Saint Alban's in Pretoria.

When was that, in the early 1980s?

In the early 1980s.

As a student at Inanda, did you feel acutely that your experience as a boarding school student was quite different from other students' school experiences?

It was quite strict at Inanda--when you were in school, you were in school. It was not like you would leave every Saturday--maybe you would leave once a month, and your parents had to write and ask permission. We were uniformed on excursions, so we stood out. And being a girls' only school, we were always a curiosity--we always drew some attention. So it was elite. While I was in exile, I did hear some things like, 'You had it nice, you went into private school.'

As a student, were you cognizant of divisions amongst the student body--between students from the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and Kwa-Zulu-Natal, for instance?

There weren't divisions. There wasn't apartheid at Inanda. We stuck together. My class, to this day, we've stuck together. Other classes haven't stayed together as much as my class. My closest friends today went to Inanda, and they are from the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KZN. Even though Inanda was supposed to be a Zulu school, it was 50:50 Xhosa/Zulu at Inanda.

What was the impact of Inkatha at Inanda? I know that shortly before your time there, Buthelezi was very involved in the school.

When we got there in 1976, Inkatha was a cultural movement trying to get into schools. They introduced a subject about culture--which would be a good thing, but it was about Inkatha's version of culture. We were quite conscientized. For instance, there was a teacher named David Brown who taught English. He was quite an activist. He snuck *Staffrider* magazines into Inanda. He was quite a hippie--I think he got kicked out.

He was a white South African?

Yes, he was--he had been at U. Natal as a student, then he was a lecturer.

I think he married Heather Hughes, the historian who wrote an article about Inanda in 1990--one of the only sources on the school.

... So Inkatha came to us at the wrong time, because we were quite aware of who we were, we were quite conscientized, and we were perceived as being protected out there, you know. The rest of the country is burning, and our parents have protected us in this little enclave because they could afford to protect us there. Even though June '76 was a turning point, it didn't start with '76. Our parents were probably thinking ahead. Inkatha was *non grata*. Personally at home we had experience, because Gatsha Buthelezi also went to Adams and I think that he and my father knew each other from school. My father chose not to get involved, so he probably had an element of wanting to protect us. Inkatha tried to come to have some kind of presence at our school as at government schools in KwaZulu-Natal. That was a good excuse for us not to get involved. We were not a government school, so we didn't have to do what they told us.

Did Inanda ever offer the Inkatha cultural curriculum, Ubuntu-Botho?

No, that was never integrated. We studied culture in Zulu class, but that's it.

Thuthula mentioned that Desmond Tutu came to speak at Inanda Seminary. Do you remember that?

I do remember Tutu. And Jesse Jackson was supposed to come, but at the last minute he couldn't come. A woman from Rainbow-PUSH came instead, a Miss Parker--she taught us all these American songs to perform, but the visit didn't happen.

Other than David Brown, do you remember any staff members who were particularly politically involved?

The school nurse was married to Stanley Nkosi, who was on Robben Island. She educated us about who we are.

What was her name?

That was Mina Ngubane. She got "Ngubane" from Ben Ngubane--she was married to him before. So she married Inkatha, and then she married ANC. The teachers were also politically active. There was Mr. Sithole, he was young--he had been kicked out of the University of Natal Medical School because he was too bright for his own good. He continued my conscientization. Also, many of our families were effected by politics. My brother who went to Amanzimtoti was in solitary confinement for almost a year in 1976. Others had parents who had been arrested. So politics was not distant from our lives. One of our classmates' father was a doctor, Dr. Khoapa. He was arrested and kept in solitary confinement. As soon as he got out, he left the country. And our prefect was Sikose Mji.

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Sikose Mji, yes.

You have heard of her?

She wrote a wonderful poem in the school newspaper from which I've borrowed the title of my dissertation, "A World of Their Own," but I haven't been able to get in touch with her.

She was much older than us. And she was very political--whenever the opportunity came, she would talk to us about politics. And then one day she just disappeared.

She went back to Soweto, to take part in the protests there. Then she left for Swaziland and Zambia.

Yes, I remember hearing that she had been in Swaziland when I came there. And Reni [?] Mandela was a student at Inanda as well. I wanted to leave the country in 1979 when my boyfriend left, but he said to finish matric first, then we'll see.

That boyfriend became your husband?

Yes, that was Tiishang Makgabo, my first husband. I went to university while my boyfriend was off in Angola and East Germany in training. Only after he came back from Angola and Swaziland could we make contact.

So you began varsity in 1981--where?

I went to Fort Hare in 1982. In 1981 I taught for a while in a township high school. Then I went to Fort Hare for a year, but after the 1983 strike I was kicked out. In 1984 I went into exile. First I had worked as a courier to Swaziland. I tried to renew my travel document--we couldn't even have passports then, we had travel documents--and it was refused, so I knew I had to leave. Then I went to Mozambique. In 1985, in the State of Emergency, my husband was linked to a unit from which people had been kidnapped. We went to the then-safe country of Kenya, then in 1988 to the U.S., to the Washington, D.C. area.

When you were a student at Inanda, did you sense any links between religious education and politics?

There were one or two kids whose fathers were politically-active pastors. I know that there were many in exile who believed that Christianity had been harmful. I was always able to separate--I understood the distinction between Christianity being "the white man's religion" and my own connection to God. I was always able to maintain my relationship with God and my identity as a person. For me, my identity as a person has been strengthened by religion. The missionary aspect of Inanda Seminary was never a factor for me. When you ask me about Inanda Seminary, I might mention Mary Edwards coming and starting the school, but Inanda wasn't primarily a missionary school for me. It was an excellent school for girls. There was religious discipline there--but that didn't mean for me, religious discipline as religious oppression--I've never seen that. My family's church was the African Congregational Church, the breakaway from the American Board, so the white man did not oppress me in my church. Other churches may have had the white man at their head, but my forefathers did that for me. For me, there's never been a

contradiction. My friends have been different--in religion, in politics. But Inanda has been the glue that has kept us together.

What did you plan to study at varsity?

I went to study pre-med. My father wanted me to be a doctor. I was clever, so my father wanted me to be a doctor. I had finished high school at sixteen--I was born in 1964. I had my first child at nineteen, so medical school no longer held an attraction for me. And there would have been a separation of the family if I hadn't gone into exile then.

How did you find the climate at Fort Hare--academically, politically?

There was a lot of anti-Sebe sentiment at the time. But there was a lot of history there as well. There was an expectation for us to continue living that. A lot of leaders had come from Fort Hare. But it was a "Bantu university," run by the national government. There was a contradictory history at Fort Hare. We were able to keep the Ciskei police out, because the university was South African property. And there was a very rich history of activism there.

Did your father attend Fort Hare?

No, my father went to the University of Natal, to study medical technology.

How did you come to attend Fort Hare?

We didn't have many choices--I had already been in Zululand and Natal, and the University of the North was too close to home. I knew that Fort Hare had a rich political history as well, and my friends were going there.

How did you feel Inanda prepared you for life after high school?

If Mother Edwards had not only come and built a high school, but had built a university so that we could leave high school and go to that university, our time would not have been wasted. Inanda made life after school difficult, in terms of coping with guys. It was a bit of a culture shock. On the whole, a lot of the girls made it--made it well and made it big--Inanda girls are senior in government, corporate world, etc. On a list of the Top Fifty Businessmen in South Africa, the first year it came out, I was #49; the next year, I was #20--something. A few others on the list went to Inanda. The Health Minister, the Deputy Health Minister, the Speaker, all went to Inanda. There was a spirit that Inanda Seminary gave me, an assertiveness, and I'm pretty sure of who I am. My developmental years were in a place where excellence was preached, excellence was rewarded, and that's where excellence happened. If Inanda Seminary had a university, I wouldn't have wasted those years. But Fort Hare also made me who I am in life. Inanda helped me to not see what people see, this divide. Even later in life when I came back and was involved in ANC politics, ethnicity came up quite a bit, and I always emphasized that we were not ethnically divided--because for me, my childhood was not. Being at Inanda made me sure that I don't see it as a divide, that we can live together. And having white staff from the United States, England, South Africa--all of the females, we were calling 'Ma,' 'Sisi.' Saying 'Ma' to a white person was normal. We could see how races could live together and be fine. It's just a pity we couldn't duplicate some of these models.

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I think that wraps up our discussion nicely--was there anything else you'd like to emphasize?

You didn't ask about how I feel Inanda prepared me for corporate life. I think when young girls are placed with young boys at a young age, they feel self-conscious about guys--they feel they need to impress guys. At Inanda, what brought you there in the first place was your brain, and never your sexuality. I think we cope better in the workplace because we put our brains first and then our femininity. I work in human resources, so human behavior is my livelihood. I see how for some women femininity is first. It may be contradictory in South Africa, but for me it's more about equality of the genders rather than, 'Because I'm a woman you have to be aware of me as a woman.' There are also Inanda's networks--I belong to two email groups. One is of my peers, 1976 to 1981--we just bond, we share our successes and our losses. I also belong to another group, made up of older role models. Hixonia Nyasulu is the most powerful black businesswoman in the country.

And what do you recall about Inanda's leadership--Inanda's principals?

Baba Zondi was the best. He was quite influential in our political life. He had been an activist at University of Zululand. He always reminded us of why we came and our political history. But there were activists at our school and also spies. That's why there was a visit from the police to Baba Zondi. That was the thing about politics for black South Africans. You were constantly reminded that you were fortunate to be in this situation--and you must remember those who are not. Schools around the country are burning and we are fine. Khosi Mpanza really politicized us and taught us how to conduct ourselves, how to clean, how to dress. She was a little older, and we were so young and needed guidance. I was eleven when I came to Inanda! So we all had such a strong bond. It was like we raised each other.

What do you recall of Zondi's successor, Mr. Lewis?

He was a South African--they drove him out of the school because he tried to conscientize us a bit. When he left we went into a riot. That was the first time there had been riots at Inanda Seminary. He was telling us the wrong things. The government didn't like him. His successor Ma Khoza was doomed to fail, because we felt complete negativity about Mr. Lewis' leaving. My class was kicked out the night before matric exams, and our parents had to fight for us to take the exams. When we left Inanda, the class of 1980, it was with negativity. Now we are mature enough to look more broadly. The school got so divided in that time. It took us a lot of time to heal. That was also the sign of the times. Baba Zondi had been there forever. Zondi was driven out by the powers that be. Lewis was definitely driven out. Another person that you should talk to is Nana Ngobese. Her sister Zodwa Ngobese was our school-mate. Nana Ngobese was the one that founded that women's political party, and she is a relative of Albert Luthuli. Another thing that you should look at is Inanda's connection to Oprah's school. When they were planning Oprah's school, they came to Inanda for a model. There's another girls' school called Mutsi Maria [?], and Hixonia's business trust takes care of that school, Inanda, and other historical girls schools. Another person you should talk to about this is Palesa Tyobeka, an Inanda graduate in the Department of Education.