

Lungi Mkhize Kwitshana.
Inanda Seminary student, 1976–1980.
Interviewed in Durban, 5 June 2010.

So to begin with, I just wanted you to state your maiden name before you were married, if it's different, when and where you were born—just some background about you.

Okay, my maiden name is Mkhize.

Okay. Right. Mkhize.

And so I didn't hear the other question.

Where were you born?

I was born in Claremont. It's a township just outside of Pinetown.

Okay, yes, not too far from here. Okay. And how did you find out about Inanda seminary? How did you decide to attend school there? Or your family decided?

Two of my sisters were there. My family decided. Two of my sisters were there before me.

So they were there earlier in the 1970s?

Yes, the first born in the house was there in the late 60s and early 70s.

What was it about Inanda Seminary that attracted your family to attend there. Were your parents interested in it being an all-girls school, or it being a mission school?

It was a combination of it being an all-girls school, because we were all girls at home... And also in being a mission school, you know the Christian values.

So were you raised quite religious?

Yes.

Were you Congregationalists? What is your denomination of your church?

We were, we are Methodists. Yes, yes. And also most importantly at that time it was one of the best high schools you could get.

And when you started at Inanda did you have any ideas what you wanted to do as a career?

Yes, I wanted to be a medical doctor.

And I'm sure Inanda had a reputation at that time to be a place to go if you wanted to be a doctor. What were your impressions of the students and staff members? Are there people you remember particularly who had an impact on your development professionally, personally?

Yes, yes definitely. The teachers I would say, their level of education.

Yeah. And what teachers do you remember in particular?

Mrs. Sangweni—in fact, two of our English teachers at the very foundation phase. I think they molded our English language so well.

You had the English rule when you were in school, right?

We were coming from the Bantu education where the medium of education was Zulu. So this

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was our first encounter with English as the medium of instruction. So they bridged that gap—I would say excellently.

Did you find that very challenging to go from isi-Zulu to English instruction?

Not really, because for my family we were encouraged to read. So I wasn't really challenged because I used to you know read English novels. And some teachers at the school were really trying to encourage us in English.

So what was your parent's background? Were they well-educated?

Yes, my mother was a nursing assistant. And my father was just a personnel office member... And my mom became mentally deranged when I was still young I think I was about six or seven. So she had to stop working and she was in and out of mental hospital. It was so difficult, even before I started school. So all along my father has been a very strong person, you know and all that. He was very passionate about education so I think that helped us a lot.

Had he attended Adams or Ohlange? What was his education?

Yes he did know about Ohlange, but he didn't particularly like it because it was a mixed school. And he was very strict.

So the environment at Inanda probably wasn't very shocking for you in terms of strictness because you came from a strict home. What did you think about attending an all-girls school? Did you like it when you were there? Were there things that you particularly liked or didn't like?

Yes, definitely. The freedom of being all-girls. Of the influence.

Why was it freeing? Was it just because you weren't concerned about male attention? Or male competition?

Yes, definitely. And all sorts of crazy things that we did as kids. [Laughs] We would walk totally naked from one end of the bathroom to the other. And that was totally fine. Yeah. And also we were just being girls and the feeling that comes with it.

So I've heard from other people who attended Inanda at that time that the students were quite mixed in terms of where they came from. The ethnic background and things like that.

Definitely.

So did you find that people integrated quite well, in terms of Zulu students and Xhosa students, people from the city people from the country? Did they get along well?

Yes, they did... There were some, a few cliques that formed. The Xhosas. But generally, they all clicked so very well.

And are you still close to people that you went to school with?

Yes, actually we are planning a 30-year reunion.

So you arrived at Inanda just after the Soweto school uprising, or just before the Soweto uprising?

Actually in 1976 that was the peak of the Soweto uprisings, yes, and we also had many students

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coming from Soweto actually so they were very influential also. You know some of the townships here in KZN they were not very radical, and for instance we had Faith Mashinini, who was Tyetse Mashinini's cousin.

And she was a student there?

Yes we came together. We were in the same class.

So you mentioned the political background. To what extent was politics discussed at school? Were you free to talk about political events, political organizations, amongst yourselves on campus, or with staff members.

Yes, we were, and hence we became very much more politically aware than for instance the students who were going to school in the townships. I think we were more politically aware of what was going on in the country. Also some of the students they had to skip the country, their parents had to skip the country, and they had to follow.

Do you remember any specific students who left school during your time there?

Yeah, Monono. Monono Khoapa...

She had to go into exile during her time at Inanda?

Yes, because the parents had to skip.

So was the interest in politics mainly ANC politics at the time you were there at that time? Were there students interested in Inkatha?

No, it was mostly ANC. I think Inkatha was perceived—you know, there was a very negative perception of Inkatha.

Yeah, it's very interesting because Buthelezi was quite involved shortly before the time you were there and do you remember him, was he ever around while you were a student there?

Yes, I remember one time the Inkatha conference was hosted at Inanda. Was it 1977 or 8? I'm not too sure about the year. But I remember when he came here. But the general excitement was that there were going to be external people. So it was just that excitement of young girls meeting people from the outside. It was not much about the Inkatha ideology. You know, remember, we were isolated in this confined environment...

Exciting.

Excitement. It wasn't really because we were excited...

So in school there was no Inkatha curriculum?

No, no, no.

It's very interesting because it seems that Inanda was one of the few schools that was within KwaZulu that was able to avoid doing that, I guess because it was an independent school.

Yes, yes, yes.

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Did Desmond Tutu come to Inanda during your time there?

No.

No, that might have been slightly before you were there? Do you remember other people that came to speak?
Mmm, mainly it was ... the church ministers who were politically inclined. Like the Reverend Africander.

Okay.

Reverend Dlodla.

Yes, I've interviewed him actually. Do you remember their speeches, sort of how they talked about their relationship to faith and politics. Did they talk about that explicitly?

Um...

Did those things come together?

Yes, definitely. One of the things they emphasized is that God did not make anyone inferior to anyone. They didn't make races to be meant to be divided for power—that was particularly from Reverend Africander...

When you were a student there, was there sort of an awareness of the school's history as far as sort of talking about its history as a mission institution, the fact that it had been around for a long time. Is that something that was mentioned?

Yes, definitely. **Because remember, it was every year on the first of March, we used to remember Mah Edwards who was one of the founders of the school, and we had a periodical, and each year we would have some article from history.**

And during the time you were at Inanda it was quite interesting, it seems that it was very elite. Everyone sort of wanted to be a doctor it seemed, or some kind of business professional, or a lawyer or something like that. How did you feel? Did you feel that you were perceived differently in your community when you left the school because you had attended Inanda? What was the sort of popular awareness in Claremont of Inanda? Were people proud of someone from the community for attending?

Yes definitely, ... the minute people heard that you were attending Inanda you were perceived as being upper-class. [Laughs]

Was it all sort of positive attention or did people think the Inanda girls were snobbish, or distant or anything like that?

Yes, there was that perception.

So you went on from Inanda, did you go directly to medical school? What did you do after Inanda? What was your career path?

[Laughs] It's been a long path. I applied to all the medical schools, and also just in case I applied to University of Fort Hare just in case I don't get accepted. My first acceptance letter came from Fort Hare and it was already the first of Feb. All the people around me had received their

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acceptance letters so I just opened the University of Fort Hare one, and then I did my first year at BSE with the hope that I would convert. In fact, I wanted to be a pre-med.

So you did that at Fort Hare or University of Natal?

University of Fort Hare, yes. Because it was the only acceptance letter I received at that time. So fourteen days later, my father phoned that I had been accepted at University of Natal. I had registered, I had paid all the feed, paid for the books and all, so when I went to inquire if I could de-register they'd only repay me half. I had spent 200 rand.

Which was a lot at that time.

Which was a lot at that time, yes. Also I had to find fly fees to fly back home. So then to me, my father was sole bread-winner, so it became cost-ineffective. The cost outweighed, you know, at that time, the benefits. So I thought I would carry on, finish that first year and then come to University of Natal. Unfortunately when I re-applied I was not accepted there were too many students who had come. So I did my second year at BSE. In July there was a huge strike.

That would be 1982.

82, yes. So I was among the people who were not accepted back.

So yes, that strike, was that a sort of mass expulsion, or was it only certain students?

No, no, no it was mass expulsion.

So what did you do after that?

Ah, at that year, and I finished, it was August already, so I then went to do medical, I was accepted at the University of Zululand, but there was no accommodation, I couldn't find accommodation. So I then went to do medical technology.

And where did you do medical technology?

Edendale, yes

So you were moving all over the place. It must be very stressful.

Ye, it was the next best thing I could do at the time. So I carried on, I didn't finish the medical technology. At that time it wasn't offered at the degree level. So I did my first diploma, then a specialist diploma, and a hand diploma. Which then opened an opportunity for me because a hand diploma was equivalent to an honors. And then I did my masters in microbiology.

Where did you do that? Where did you do your masters?

At University of Natal, yes.

And when was that? Did you just go straight through, with all those degrees? Or were you working in between?

No, I was working as soon as I got my first diploma qualification. I started working. And then I got married, and then I had kids, from my hand[?] diploma onward, I was having kids and family.

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And when I did my masters it was the same story.

And how did you feel Inanda Seminary prepared you for university, did you feel that it prepared you well?
Yes, academically, definitely. It did.

Were there any challenges socially in terms of interacting with men at university?

Not personally. There was a perception that Inanda girls, when they come to university, they become over-excited, and hence—

Yeah, other people have told me that as well. [Laughs]

So my friend and I decided we were not going to have boyfriends the first year, because we wanted to disprove that perception at that time. I would say personally Inanda affected me later in interacting with men because I had challenges interacting or having boyfriends later. It's just that that bad perception was there.

In terms of the political environment at Fort Hare, how different do you feel the environment was from Inanda, which seems kind of like protected space, where you were able to think about political issues and such? What was your experience in moving between those two spaces?

I think being at Inanda helped me in being politically aware... because actually I have a rubber bullet wound. Yeah, during that strike, yeah, so. I felt vulnerable and exposed because home was so far away. I remember I felt so emotional after the strike. I had a rubber bullet wound, and I couldn't go to the hospital because the police were waiting there. I felt vulnerable and unprotected compared to where I was coming from.

It was very different. Did you have a leading role in the strike? Were you a political leader?

Not a political leader. [Laughs]

Did you feel at Inanda, were girls from the townships, did they tend to be political leaders more, especially girls from Johannesburg?

Yes, yes definitely.

Do you remember a student named Sikose Mji? She left in '76.

Oh, yes, yes.

Do you remember anything about her? She's been mentioned by a couple of people as being a very -

Yes, yes, a very politicized individual. We sort of, like, looked up to her. Looked up to her.

Do you remember any other students who were politically influential in your time at Inanda?

I can't remember. There was a secretarial school, those were people who had already matriculated...

Girls there were a bit older, probably in general. How did they interact with girls in the high school? Did they interact a lot? Have conversations about the world outside of Inanda? Those kinds of things?

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Uh, yeah, to a certain degree, you know they kept to themselves but I guess it was the generation gap, so to speak. But generally they did interact.

What would you say in general was Inanda's influence on your life? What would you say is the most important thing that came out of your time at Inanda?

Because of the environment, it's taken me to where I am. I'm self-driven. I'm still studying at this age.

What are you studying now?

I'm working on my thesis, PhD thesis.

And what is your thesis on?

The influence of parasites on immune response to HIV. It's small, it's lab-based.

That's great, congratulations.

Ah! It's been the longest journey. Like when I first registered I discovered that I was pregnant with her. [Laughs]

So it's been about seven years?

I put it on hold. When my daughter was 12 my son was 9, and I was really ready, so for two years, I put it on hold, and two years later I resumed.

Okay. So you feel that Inanda make you be self-driven?

And motivated. And also a passion for studying, I think.

Do you remember anything particularly about the different principals you had while you were there? You were there with Mr. Baba Zondi, Mr. Lewis and Ms. Koza. Do you remember different things about their leadership styles, and how they interacted with students?

Mr. Zondi, you just see his face and you run away.

Did you really?

Yea I think he was from a family that was, you know, upright.

He's still around Inanda quite a bit. I don't know how recently you've been out there? He was running the school library for a while. He just actually retired last year. He's like 80 years old.

Oh, wow.

Yeah, he's doing well, still. Yeah, I interviewed him last year. It was interesting. Yeah, I haven't hear that he was a fierce leader, I guess in comparison to Mrs. Koza.

Yeah, there was chaos there. We actually went on strike and then it was just a few weeks before we wrote our final exams. I must say her leadership style was -

Do you remember what the strike was about in 1980?

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It was about the funds.

About the funds?

Yes, we strongly believed she was abusing the funds.

Oh really?

Yes, because at the time her daughter was overseas. I can't remember, I think she was in America. So she traveled to America and we heard that her daughter was getting married. Was going to use the school funds to raise funds... There were questions about her mismanaging the funds, and I don't know if that was a perception, but we strongly believed she was abusing the funds. Because then after she went to Swaziland, said she was going to raise funds. In all occasions she never came back with any funds. I remember she came back from Swaziland, she came with a truck full of pineapples and she gave, she showed us those pineapples. She said you don't want any pineapples. So mainly it was about her management of funds. And her level of approach, she didn't have a proper approach. There was a very good maths teacher, Carol Garn.

Okay, yeah. A lot of people have mentioned her.

Yes, she was an American. She resigned during Mrs. Koza's tenure, because of her autocratic approach. So the students were really aggrieved by that also. In fact a lot of good teachers I think resigned at that time.

That's interesting because a lot of students who were at Inanda in the 80s, a lot of them don't remember Mrs. Koza very well, but some do remember her more fondly.

Oh.

I don't know how to make of this person. I interviewed her, but she's quite old now, so it's hard to tell what her presence might have been like when she was a younger woman.

I actually met her 15 years later and she had actually cast us... She had changed from what she was when she was at Inanda.

So when you left Inanda were you, did you have positive feelings about the institution. Some people who left in the 80s left a little bit, sort of bitter about the institution, where it was going. When you left—
So when I left, the years later I had some negative feelings. I think the rules had become a bit lax. There was the kind stories we hear that the students were drinking and smoking, something you'd never even dream of. [Laughs]

It seems like it was very strict, 70s, into the first half of the 80s. Were there any other teachers who left a particular impact on you?

Yeah, besides the two English teachers, Mrs. Ngqwebu and Mrs. Sangweni, Ms. Garn, for her maths... But she left when we were in matric. And Ms. Trembath, she was from England.

Ms. Trembath?

T-R-E-M-B-A-T-H. And Mr. Brown, they were both from the UK.

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They were both English teachers?

Yes, they were both English teachers, yes. They were also fascinated. I guess their interactions with us, they were so fascinated because they were coming to South Africa for the first time, so they were fascinated by the different cultures, the political environment, and everything else. For us, it gave us the, the perceptions of the whites in South Africa. If they are created at a very young age, you know, the perception we had, personally. We had a negative perception. But there were these white people, interacting with us, allowing us to hold their hand. I think that was one of the impressions, sort of removed the stereotypes that were created by the apartheid era. So that was one of the impressions also.

Yeah, and I've heard Mr. Brown. I've heard that he was pretty politically involved, and talked about political issues with the issues of the students. Do you remember anything about that?

Yes.

So when you were there, did students still do the reading of the news once a week?

Yes, yes. I remember one time, when Mandela [?] had been arrested on that day, and it was my turn to read the news. So when it came time to read the news, all the Zulu teachers came, and said, you're too brave. [Laughs]

That's interesting, okay. Were there any other activities that you were involved in as a student? Were there debates, sporting activities, or something like that?

Unfortunately, no sporting activities. I was in the debate society, and in the speech and drama, badminton I would say C-team. And in 1980, I was the school chair lady.

The what?

The school chair lady.

To coordinate events and stuff?

Yeah, yeah.

That's cool.

It was quite a challenge because Mrs. Koza was the principal then and I was one of the people who was involved in writing the petition. So [laughs].

Yeah that would be quite difficult.

She would call me and say. Lynette, do you know who the culprits are?! [Laughs]

You went by Lynette when you were a student?

Yes, yes.

So you were Lynette Mkhize?

Yes.

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Yeah, I always have to make sure about people's names, because often there are a couple of names used, and last names. So did you visit other schools as a student there, in terms of doing sporting meets with others?

Yes, we went to other schools like Ohlange, Amanzimtoti, Mariannhill.

Do you remember noticing any differences between Inanda and other schools that you visited?

The striking one wa—well, they were big schools. But the behavior! Especially Ohange. I don't remember whether there were too lax, or—

Do you have anything else that you wanted to mention, as far as things that you think are important for me to know the period that you went to Inanda?

I should think that the friendships that we formed are very solid. Even now, I have not been able to make friendships that are comparable to them.

So you're still quite close?

Yeah, yeah. And the motivation generally—people who come from Inanda are highly motivated. And the language proficiency. [Laughs]

Yeah, it is very striking... everyone's English is quite amazing, even older women.

Yeah, yeah. That was interesting. It was amazing. I don't know how they managed to get top-quality English teachers.

They really did. What else—in terms of the material conditions of the school, like the food, the housing?

[Laughs]

How was that? Was it rough?

Yeah. The worst was the cold shower on winter morning, 5am. But I guess it molded us in some way, you know like made us resilient.

I would imagine. One of the ladies I interviewed in Jo'Burg, I don't remember if it was Thuthula or Khanyisile, said the fact that you had cold water was kind of important because it determined who continued to go there. Near the end of your time there, some of the formerly white schools were opening up to a few African students, so some of the people began to want to leave Inanda for more fancy places.

I was actually in the same class with Thuthula and Khanyisile...

It seems it was a really interesting time when you guys were there... it seems the 70s was the high point for Inanda being very competitive.

Yes, yes.

Consistently producing very accomplished graduates, seeking medical professions. It's quite interesting. Did most of your classmates go into medical professions, that you remember?

Yeah, yeah. There were about too many. About 15 or so, or more actually.

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That's quite a lot.

I think also because the entrance criteria, the bar was quite high. You had to be an average B student, to be able to stay throughout the five years. Because I remember those who didn't make it were like getting C, they would not be allowed to remain...

When you applied to Inanda, were there interviews? An exam?

Yes. There were interviews.

Was it a nerve-raking experience?

Definitely, you had to polish your English.

But your sister had gone. So you probably—

Yes, got some coaching on that.

What did your sisters do after Inanda?

The elder one went to University of Zululand to do a BA social work. Which she didn't finish also because of the riots there. She reverted to nursing. And then my other sister did nursing. They're both in the UK now.

Okay, yeah, did they go to the UK recently or they went a long time ago?

One left in 2001. The other on left in 2005...

Okay, I think those are all of my questions for today. Thank you.