

Bongekile Dhlomo (née Makhoba).
Inanda Seminary student, 1951-1952.
Interviewed in Durban, 11 March 2009.

Note: Interviewee only consented to archiving written transcript, as modified on 15 June 2010.

What was your maiden name and when and where were you born?

My name was Bongile Makhoba. I was born at Kranskop, in the rural area of Untunjambili—it is a mountain with a tunnel through it.

What is your family background?

I was born in a Christian home, Lutheran. My father was Jeremiah, my mother, Kesiah. And my primary school education was at Untunjambili, before I proceeded to Inanda Seminary.

And why did you attend Inanda Seminary? Why did your parents decide to send you there?

Well, my family, my mother and father, were both—well, my father was, I would say, semi-literate—both went to school and educated themselves later in on in life. But I would say both my mother and father were illiterate; later on in life my father learned to read and write, and so did my mother, but only in their adult lives. But they had really observed that people that, you know, had been educated were able to get good jobs, and were able to do better and live better. So they, well, they grew up in the farms, having to work for farmers and so on. They were then hopeful that their children would not go through the same hardships and so on. My grandfather went to work in Johannesburg, for instance, and found that people who had been educated at Ohlange, which is a school that is near Inanda, could type, could read, write, and so on, and therefore their jobs were better. He hoped therefore to send his own son, that is my brother, but he died when we were still young and my father was unable to fulfill that dream. But it had always been my father's dream to send his boys to the same school, and he did have all of us educated.

So he sent your brothers to Ohlange.

Well, yes, he managed to. We came from the Lutheran Church. And the Lutheran Church would sometimes offer scholarships for bright scholars to go to school, so my father applied for a scholarship to send my brother to Ohlange. But there is also I would say the competition of, 'You can't take my scholarship from the Lutherans and go to the UCC.' So they wanted us to go to other Lutheran schools. But my father's argument was that, these Lutheran schools at this time, there were no schools that offered bookkeeping or whatever. So in the end, he chose to decline the scholarship and try and raise the money himself. So both my brothers went to Ohlange. There were six of us, four girls and two boys, and so the two boys went

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to Ohlange. You know the history of Ohlange of course. So my father was influenced by the fact that it was a school for an African and a school that produced, you know... so, that was the choice my father made.

Did you sisters all go to Inanda?

No, only my youngest sister went to Inanda as well. But my older sister—the brothers are first and last born, we girls are in between—my eldest sister was a teacher. She went to a Lutheran institution at Umpumulo. But my brother liked Inanda for me, because the Lutheran school only offered teaching, and I wanted to be a nurse, so, he said, no, Inanda Seminary is the best school. My younger sister coming after me went to Eshowe; they had opened up Eshowe High School which was a Lutheran school, and that's where she went, which was only in the '60s. But then my younger sister followed me.

So you enrolled in Inanda Seminary in 1948, right?

No, I enrolled in 1951.

I had thought that you graduated in 1952—is that not right?

No, I graduated in 1952. I was 51-52.

How old were you when you came to Inanda?

In other words I came from really a poor family, where my father and my mother did not have proper jobs, but they raised us all by tilling the lands and selling vegetables and therefore they were able to live from that—they were not true farmers in a way, but they cultivated enough to feed us and to send us all to school. And so, by the time I went to Inanda my brother, who had been at Ohlange, had started working as a secretary and treasurer for Eshowe High School. What was interesting here was, here were the Lutherans who didn't have any schools and yet refused him the scholarship, but as soon as he finished they were the first to ask him to come and serve. To say the least my father wasn't very happy. But my brother said, no, he took the job. So he worked for Eshowe for many years after that, as the first secretary and treasurer of the school, until the government took over all the missionary-run institutions. By this time my brother—he was the one that took over my education, because my parents really couldn't afford very much from whatever they were selling.

Did you get any scholarship or other support from Inanda?

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No, but he was working... In fact he was incredible, because he was able, from the little salary he got, someone who just started working—he wasn't earning much, but at that same year myself and my sister both went to boarding schools. You know, the history of education for the African was—there were no, further than Standard Seven, we did not have in our own villages or in our own townships, we did not have high schools. So anybody who wanted to finish had to go to these missionary-run institutions, I'm talking about Inanda Seminary, Ohlange, Adams, Inkomana, all those mission-run institutions. So your parents, struggling as they were, if you wanted to be educated you had to go to these boarding schools. And remember that the government did not support the education of a black child. So really we had to be educated at the great expense and the great sacrifice of our families. So when I finished Standard Seven he took both me and my older sister, and she had to go to Umpumulo, and I went to Inanda Seminary, and my brother had to pay for the two of us, and look after my parents, although they were in a way self-sufficient, and there were still my younger brothers and sisters in the lower classes. So there I was going to Inanda Seminary from the rural areas, it was my first time going to Durban and traveling on my own with the money that had been calculated, for me to take a bus from here to Stanger, and from Stanger you will take a train to Durban station, and there you will be met by buses from Inanda, so. I don't know, people were privileged to have parents who were educated. I mean, my father was not educated, but very skilled—I don't think I was ever—but it meant we had to do everything, we had to make sure that we had applied, were accepted, we would tell them that this is what we are doing and where we are going. But when we would leave home they would honestly not know where we were, they had never themselves been to Durban, they'd never been to Inanda, and so on. At that time, *eish*—we were fourteen, fifteen, and we traveled to school. Anyway we got to Inanda and we were met—the used to organize buses to meet all the students from 4 pm to 6 pm, they would wait for us at the Durban station or the rank, the Inanda rank, and take all the students from there in buses to Inanda Seminary... I dare say one day I missed my bus, my bus from home to Stanger was late, so I was late getting on the train to Durban, I got to Durban, and I had to stay at the Durban station all night... [She saw some Eshowe students there and they notified her brother, who called the school to excuse her, so she wouldn't be punished for being late.] When I got to Inanda rank I had to put my trunk on my head, take my provision basket, and walk that stretch to Inanda, and that gravel in those days... When I look back at a child now who will be taken by a taxi from

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home... When you got to school everything would be arranged... In those days, you knew that you had to apply very early if you wanted a place... I would say then, for the first time, my teacher is going to be white. Going to be American, with the American accent.

So you know the American accent well. [Laughs]

Honestly, I thought I knew English enough to know what's going on, but American accents—most of them were American, sure, and there were other Africans, but principal and matron, so to have to start learning not only the use of English language but the American accent, and how it's going to be like to be taught by the white teachers, those were some of the experiences. But they were soon overcome because Inanda Seminary is a very friendly atmosphere, and I got to know that everybody is called members and why. The other thing was—this initiation, when you got to school you were initiated to be there, all these stupid things they did at other schools. At Inanda Seminary it was strictly forbidden, so there was no way in which I would say we were ill-treated by the old girls... You easily then got down into real work... So immediately one was able to get into the routine of things. The Inanda Seminary day started at six in the morning—no, 5:10 am. Everything had to be done in twenty minutes. 5:10-5:30 you are washing, you go to the bathrooms. To relieve the space in the bathroom—others will go straight to the quiet time of prayer or whatever, and then they would go to the bathrooms, to relieve the space at that time. And the others would do bed-making at that time. By half past six to seven we all had our study period. And then from seven o'clock we go for campus care, which was cleaning of the campus. We didn't have cleaners at the school, so students were allocated—some would clean classrooms, others the dining rooms, others the courtyards and so on, then from there we went for our breakfast, from half past seven to eight, then at eight o'clock we had our morning prayers together, then we started our day, until four pm.

What was the curriculum like? What classes did you take?

I took Standard 8 and JC and then I went to McCord Hospital. Now McCord Hospital, also a UCCSA hospital, so we had a special relationship. We didn't apply. They would simply say, who wants to go to McCord? Who wants to do nursing and go to McCord's? We would lift up our hands and they would take our names and send them to McCord. The advantage that McCord had was that we were students that they know, because Inanda would not recommend a student who was stupid. And then McCord would let you know when you would come in, whether February or August... The advantage was you didn't have to apply, you

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had to go to a very good training hospital and so on. So I was happy to be at Inanda, they didn't just teach the subjects but they taught the whole child. The extramurals would be the scriptures, it was compulsory, but it was extramural. The cooking classes, the homecrafts—we were told how to look after our homes, how to do laundry, housewifery and so on... It was that that one appreciated about Inanda; they sort of looked at everything. They taught us how we could take care of our communities, you know, we had community projects, we taught Sunday school, right down to Umzinyati, and you could choose to do it, you were not forced.

Did you teach Sunday school?

No, I didn't... but there was all that about Inanda Seminary. And then of course the friendliness—when we leave we would be a family. This “At Home,” for instance, that bringing of girls back for the prize-giving ceremony—it means everybody comes home. And if someone had achieved, and you know, graduated, or been promoted, it would be announced, and obviously we were very approved that such-and-such had achieved. It was things like that that encouraged us. That was just what I liked about Inanda. But ooh, it was very strict, very strict. Sometimes over-strict.

In what ways was it strict?

Well, if you made noise you would get a mark. Sometimes we would have to work half an hour because we were screaming, we were excited or something and we screamed. If you spoke Zulu and so on during the week, you were punished.

So in your time, you could only speak Zulu on the weekends?

Yes, only English during the weeks. Well, you could speak any other language after 4 pm on Friday, but then back to English on Monday. Little things. That of course, made me really scared of doing anything—but it was all really to make sure that things go smoothly. Because as you leave Inanda and get to places where you relax and so on, the discipline went... Then when one goes from Inanda Seminary to McCord, eh...

So did many of your classmates go with you when you went to McCord?

Yes, they did. Oh, there were quite a lot of them.

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So you came into Inanda expressly wanting to be a nurse, right? Or did you decide to become a nurse when you were in school?

Yes, I always wanted to be a nurse... I liked looking after people. But when you are a child you like how nurses carry themselves and so on, what they do, and then as you go along you say, ooh, I also like to look after people, but as a child it comes separately... and what I did, I have enjoyed.

You did nurses' training after you graduated—that was 1953?

I was at McCord's from 1953, I did my training 1953 to 1957. Then I was asked to remain on the staff after I finished, and I remained twenty years. Counting my training I was on the staff from 1953 to 1973, which was twenty years.

Your husband was Albert Dhlomo. When did you get married?

1961. July 8, 1961. McCord's was just home from home. The same principles of what—friendliness, being family, and they were extremely good at just making sure. Like at Christmas they knew that we were away from home, and we would take part, they would have special Christmas dinners that used to be served by the doctors and so on. Sometimes you would miss the hospital Christmas when you had to be on holiday at home—just the spirit and the friendliness and so on... Above all I enjoyed nursing and I enjoyed my patients. Luckily I did not stay in one department, I went from one to another. What I learned is hard work, without really looking at self. What I liked about it is, we worked very hard, but if somebody would think about it and say, 'Thank you very much, you did well,' that goes a long way. This is what McCord's to do. And also, if at all you were sick, you would go to the matron to report back, and she would say, "No, I don't think you are fit enough," and you would rest... It was like it would be if you were at home... And if you had any problems or so on, they would take it as their problem too, and they would look after you and so on... They would say, if your child is sick, 'Go home and see that she is fine. Why did you leave the child when she was sick?' you know, the matron, if she knew your child was very ill, or just sick... If at all you had to work overtime and to sacrifice, you didn't think twice. When, for example, my husband was involved in politics and was imprisoned, arrested, detained, and so on, McCord was very, very supportive, very supportive. Like when they were still in detention they were allowed to have food from home, or a change of clothing, and so on. And because I was living way in the township and was a full-time nurse, I couldn't really afford to send him food, and neither could I afford to visit because, you know, the hours to visit were working hours. Now, McCord Hospital immediately—'All right, Albert is going to get food from

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the hospital'... The hospital transport would literally take me at lunchtime [to visit], would send food down there.

That's fantastic.

The welfare of staff was fantastic. They really were with us.

Was there anyone in particular at McCord that coordinated all of that, or did the staff as a whole?

No, it was—I remember, of course, the offering of the transport was the matron calling... but sometimes, because they didn't have many hospital transports, I remember once one of the doctors coming to me and he said, 'Uh, I heard that your husband—do you need anything? If you need transport to see him let me know.' I remember Dr. Pokroy, and there was Dr. Hall, both of them would come and come down with me and take food. In the end I rarely took hospital transport because the doctors would do that, or other colleagues would do that. It really made the hospital a second home for me. They wouldn't say, you know, you've taken time off... It was those things that made, to me, McCord Hospital very close to my heart. In the end I did the tutor's course, and I went to, I taught in the lectures, I was a lecturer.

At McCord.

Yes, from 1966 until I left, in 1973.

And then when you left in 1973, you went to the UK.

I went to the UK. I was lucky that the matron at McCord was English and had returned to the UK to work for the nursing council. And her duties were to look after the foreign nurses coming from foreign hospitals.

What was her name?

Miss Dennis. When I applied to be admitted by the council, she picked up my application, and she called me and said, 'Why didn't you tell me you applied?' So it was very easy because she knew my training, she didn't have to ask any questions and I didn't have to do any extra training. By the time I actually left the country it was just to look for a job.

Your husband was on Robben Island from 1967 to 1970, is that right?

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My husband was on Robben Island from—he was first detailed in '63, he did 90-day detention, then he was acquitted—at the end he was charged but acquitted. That was short-lived; he was re-arrested in 1966, beginning, now held for eighty days; after that period he was charged with membership in the African National Congress, which was a banned organization, and was sentenced to a period of three and a half years—but including the period in detention, so it was really four and a half years. And when he finished, by that time, I was banished from Lamontville to Umlazi, on my own, that was before he was released from Robben Island. I was living in Lamontville township, and I was banished from Lamontville to Umlazi, we were forcibly removed.

And when was that?

1970, just before he came back. And in fact if I did not resist and did not take them to court... in fact, it was delayed until he got back, but they served him with a banning order that restricted him to Umlazi, and in fact I was banished and removed from Lamontville to Umlazi.

Did you have children?

They were very small at the time; they hardly remembered him. We got married in 1961. When he was first detained, that was 1963—one was one year, the other had just been born... when he came back, in 1970, they hardly remembered, they vaguely remembered... The third was born after 1972; he had stayed with us from 1970 to 1972. And then he left the country, a year before us, because he was going on a scholarship to study in the UK...

Do you want some tea? [Her friend, a fellow Inanda alumna, has brought tea a while ago. The friend protests that the water is no longer hot enough and she will boil some fresh.]
[To friend] Boiled or boiling?

It's still quite warm. [Friend says, 'You know me!']
She always says, 'Are you having boiling water or boiled water?'

My mother likes very hot tea as well. [Laughs]
Yes, I like it very hot.

Were there other Inanda alumnae who had husbands on Robben Island or husbands who were detained?

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Yes, we were—yes. Melta, the one who was there on Saturday—Melta Dube, she was with my sister on Saturday. She was my bridesmaid, and she got married to my husband's friend later on, but they were just about to get married; their wedding was to take place the following Saturday, and he was arrested... That stopped the whole thing. They got married four years later when he came out from Robben Island. There was one young man who was working there [at Inanda] as a cleaner, he was also at McCord's, he was the same. There were a few more. But they were very good at McCord, they were very good at supporting people who had been affected by the laws of apartheid.

Were you involved in politics at all?

I was involved. Particularly after my husband's been in prison. Whilst he was there really, I would be sympathetic, whilst he was on Robben Island. The system of apartheid would force you, whether you thought you would try and play safe and not do anything—it did force you to be involved in a way. For instance, it was obvious that when they were arrested they had to have a defense, so we had to start organizing funds and so on—as far as the government was concerned, that was political. Or trying to conscientize people against the injustices, because nobody's going to give you money unless they know why your husband's in trouble in the first place, so, that in itself. And the other thing that forced me was, most of the other wives of political prisoners were in the rural areas, and they didn't know much, they were illiterate, and so on. So when their husbands were imprisoned they just didn't know what to do. So I made it my business to make sure that they would visit, I made sure that their children were looked after—for some of them, the husbands were the only breadwinners, and the government would not take sympathetically that the breadwinners were in prison... So we would make sure that the children would continue, that they would go to school, that they would keep their houses and so on. So I was involved with that quite a lot. But because I was also able to visit my husband on Robben Island, and quite frequently, I became their conduit of what's going on outside... He would get worried sometimes, but also he would worry that there was no way one could. When, for instance, I was served with a notice to relocate to Umlazi from Lamontville, my home, that was electrified, that was comfortable, and so on, and go into a township house with no electricity at the time, that was small—you were therefore forced to resist all these things. Therefore I became very heavily involved, you know, in the underground movement. At one time the prisoners on Robben Island were—my husband

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smuggled a letter. I visited him when he—you know, they studied on Robben Island, and he was to be writing his exams. When the results came—he used to correspond with Unisa. And no results—I hadn't heard from him... I then realized, my husband and one other... they led a protest inside, because one of the prisoners had died working on a particular quarry that was wet and so on, and one of their inmates had died from pneumonia and was taken to a hospital and died... My husband was the one who was leading the protest, who was taking signatures and so on. That is why I wasn't hearing anything. In the meantime he was taken to further detention inside, to solitary confinement, and the privilege to study and to take exams had been withdrawn. So he smuggles a letter to me to say, you know, please do something about our plight in here. So the first letter comes and it's dilapidated—you know, they would cut off anything that they did not want you to see. Or they would cut off part of it so that you don't get it. So the first letter had the salutation, the greetings, and then once you got to the rest of the story it would all be scratched out; and eventually it was cut. So the letter was just useless... the next one came. And this letter had escaped censoring—it was in that letter that he was telling us that there was this and that, please do something. I wrote to Helen Suzman, Helen Suzman responded, and I wrote to the Commissioner of Prisons and the Minister of Justice at that time. And the Commissioner of Prisons went down to Robben Island and was furious, saying, 'Your wife wants to the rule this prison,' and so on. That was when my husband got worried—he thought then that I'm going to be arrested.

But you didn't get arrested.

They came down and they said to him—I was already saying I wanted permission to visit. They kept saying, we have received your letter, but not giving me permission. In the end I had to get hold of the lawyers, and I told them that I wanted to go but they were not giving me permission to go. So they gave me permission, but they were giving me the wrong time [to catch the boat]... I knew the schedule... When I got there they hadn't even told him he had a visitor. When he saw me he couldn't believe it... 'Bongi rules Robben Island,' he said. Then of course I would be harassed—like a letter to come to the offices... These letters would be delivered at one a.m. So whether or not you did not want to be involved in politics, in the end you were forced to. You couldn't really stand and be an onlooker. Then of course I continued underground. When I went overseas... I was on the executive of the African National Congress in London, chairperson of the women most of the time or in the executive. I also was responsible for the teaching of our young South African children their history,

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culture, and about the struggle. We also had a cultural group called the Mayibuye group, and this group was about poetry, songs, narration of our struggle, but it had to be stories given to others... we would sing our freedom songs, tell them about that, and that was very effective. We worked together with people like Ronnie Kasrils, who was Minister of Intelligence, and Pallo Jordan, who is Minister of Arts and Culture, oh, and many others. Those were very good at poetry, at reading and composing it. That was very successful. We then traveled through the whole of Europe. There wasn't a country I didn't know.

What years that that?

[Pauses for a moment] Right. We then returned in South Africa—I had first applied for a passport but was refused. We had to leave then on an exit permit, never to return. We returned only when we could be allowed to, after 1990... I was listed as one of the MPs, but of course it depends on whether...

So you were in Swaziland, Zambia, first?

Well, when I was in England I worked full-time as a nurse. Because I worked night duty, I was supposed to work seven nights on, seven nights off. That's full-time. Of course it gave me enough time to also be involved with the work of the African National Congress. And on my holidays in between I really had enough time to do that. Then we came back in 1990. In 1994 we worked very hard with my husband to fundraise and build a clinic for Chesterville; that's where my husband came from... I also have been working with the Natal Women Resource Center. I'm just wondering now, is this about Inanda or about myself?

Well, it's Inanda and about you as well.

At the time we started the resource center here in Natal, that was 1993... It was for us to make sure that women are empowered with knowledge that they really needed... We were to be a vehicle if women needed to know something, we would find experts, we would organize workshops. With this HIV/AIDS pandemic, we would organize something and educate them... This was irrespective of their political affiliations.

When did you get involved with Inanda again? You're on the school's Board of Governors now.

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Both of these, I'm still a member of the Natal Women Resource Center. But in 1997, Inanda Seminary, at the Inanda Seminary prize-giving, At Home, it was announced that Inanda Seminary would close down at the end of year, that parents ought to find alternative schools for their children. And then subsequent to that it was announced at a meeting of the chair council of which Mrs. Madlala—did you meet Florence Madlala?

Yes.

Of which Florence Madlala is a member, and a member of Inanda Seminary—oh, she was livid about that. She said, 'No, has this decision been made final?' 'Yes, we announced it.' 'Oh no,' she said, 'But who else knows? There is no way of saying who else knows.' The church had taken the decision, because they had tried everything. The bills the school was mounting, for the telephone, and electricity and so on, and the buildings are dilapidated, falling apart, and to repair them and so on—at the time the estimation was over five million rand. And the parents failed to pay fees... There was this culture of non-payment for anything, and that you saw all the time. In the end, the church said, 'No, this was not taken lightly, but we had really tried everything.' In 1995 they asked the government to help by paying the teachers' salaries. The government agreed, they paid the teachers' salaries, but still the problem of the buildings... She [Madlala] got out of there and she phoned us around, she spoke to us and so on, and we had meetings at Beatrice Street in Durban here where we called old members and old friends of Inanda, all interested parties, even the Education Department and representatives around at that time, we called them, and they came around. It was lovely. It was well-attended. We said, 'We have got to do something now.' It was October—November, December, school closes. So we got together and a number of meetings were held and eventually the core of the ten girls came out of this, and we started asking the church to have a dialogue, and we would plead with the church and so on. They came around, and they said, 'Look, it's not like we don't want to go on at Inanda, but it's impossible, it's impossible, you'll see.' And it was. By then we had been to the school, we had run around, to see for ourselves, and oof, my God, it was terrible. So we did some research... We had been around even to the chief of the area, and we asked if he could do something, and he said, 'Oh yes.' And we said, 'Can you write a letter,' so we can present these letters to the church. We had a meeting with the church... They came back and said, 'Yes, all we can say is we have done all that we can. We have given up on Inanda. If you say you can do it, all right, continue'... We saw that if it was going to work it would be as a Section 21 company, not for gain, a component of which would be the old girls, the

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church, and the community, and the day-to-day running of this thing should be led by the old girls... We involved the church as board members. The church then had to choose three representatives for the Board. Then the work began, the problems began... We had to go to the school to see that the classrooms were okay—hey, they were terrible! The roofs, most if not all of them, were leaking, which meant there was a dampness... the windows were broken. Graffiti! I still cannot believe. Where the children could reach there was graffiti... On their desks, on the chairs, on the walls, oh. Teachers were so discouraging. They were saying, ‘What if we do this and the children do that?’ You had to really change everything—the mindset of the children, the mindset of the teachers. You know, that Stanwood was only inhabitable in the front part, the sitting room... the rest was stuffed with rubbish, books, old newspapers, just things dumped all over. A building that was so nice... but windows were broken... The general office, the mission house—there were only three offices in front... the others were full of old papers and books, and you could see the waste. Just everywhere. The dormitories, we didn’t even want the parents to go up there with their children! The rule was you just leave your children there and go, bye-bye! [Laughs]... The parents had faith in the school and faith and everything, and they were with us and they knew the problems. Grade 12 was very, very grateful, because at that grade level they couldn’t really get placed anywhere. At that grade level, where do you go? So they were very grateful. And then we had, now, the teachers that were paid by the government from 1995, and who did not want the takeover of the school... We sat with the teachers and said, look, can we sit down and discuss why the results were so bad the year before? And they said, ‘Look here, you have nothing to do with the actual teaching. You can come here to revitalize the school and fundraise and whatever, but we don’t think that you have any mandate whatsoever to intervene with teachers. But we said we hadn’t come here to renew only the walls and so on. We had come to improve the overall ethos of the school, the excellent academics and this and that we knew had existed over the years. With that they did not agree. They went back and said we should meet at the trade unions’ offices in town; the teachers said, I remember, ‘Hey, we rushed from the school and left all the children on their own. Even the principal had left the school’... There were two members of the staff, Miss Barkus and Mr. Bennie, did not join them, they were always with us, saying the old girls were doing a good job... They [the other teachers] told us in no uncertain terms that they were paid by the government and they don’t think that they can take any orders from us or so on. And of course the

Bongikile (Makhoba) Dhlomo
Inanda Seminary Student, 1951-1952

trade unions were a bit skeptical about this—they wanted to find out if this was a public school or a government school... And then we started to say, you know, finding the status of the school... In the end it was said that the school belongs to the church, it was just that there was a gentleman's agreement of [the state] paying the teachers... Then they [the teachers] organized that the children go on strike against us.

Oh, is it?

Oh, yeah.

When was that, 1997?

Oh, it was 1998. 1998 was difficult. Financially we could go on because the teachers were being paid by the government and so on, but oh, the problems between the teachers and us. By the end of the year we had decided to get rid of the teachers paid by the government. We went to the Department of Education and told them our problems and our plight... So we decided that the teachers paid by the government must go... To be honest we didn't know where we would get the money from... So, a decision between the Education Department and ourselves was reached, and one of the directors came to inform the teachers. They got quite a shock, because they knew that no way could we do anything and get rid of them because we had no money. By the 12th of December they had to vacate the premises... Some of them vandalized the place... But we said, okay, by the end of that day, they are gone. And we started advertising for teachers who had either taken their [retirement] packages or those that did not have jobs since they had qualified. We had loads of people who came in, and we interviewed them, and by the 1st of January they started... Sometimes we would be able to pay them for two months, the third month, before the children come back, we have a problem... Because the buildings were dilapidated, there was always something to repair, and that took a lot of our money. Until we got hold of Mandela who came and brought SAPPI and SAPPI promised a million which at that time we thought was so marvelous—but one million in a place where really five million was estimated as the price of repair was nothing... Eventually we sat together and they wanted to know from us how this million should be spent, and our first thing was, ooh, Edwards Hall. And they said, just wait a minute. If you take this one million and use it on one building when the school is in such shape, what do you think? We soon said, yeah, they were right... We must do something with the rest of the buildings, make sure that they are habitable and so on and leave that burned building to the old girls [to pay for]... but what they were prepared to do was to

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clean it up, to board it up... and recap the top so that there is no further deterioration until we found such money to fix it up. They did very nicely, they painted it outside. When you came in you wouldn't realize it was a building without a roof.

So then you raised money from the old girls.

As time went on the estimated cost of returning it [Edwards] was three million... They [SAPPI] ended up spending three and a half million on it [the whole campus refurbishment process]... They made sure that we had a maintenance trust fund started. For the first three years, if we put in 50% in trust fund, they would also match it with 50%... We used to fund fifty rands each child to go into the maintenance fund...

It seems you've done an amazing job.

They also did help us to get a principal that is going to be able to run the school properly... Eventually we got Judy. So SAPPI did play a major role, or Mandela for bringing SAPPI in, and SAPPI for doing what they did to help us. Then more people came in to help us, because the school wasn't as bad as it had been before...

This has been very helpful. Do you have any final thoughts you want to share?

No, Inanda Seminary has been very important in my life. I told you my early years and how it shaped—coming from the village outside or whatever, and then the teaching and responsibility we learned at Inanda, and the friendship, and how to work as a collective, and as a family even outside our own real families, you know. In other words, you adopt a community spirit. That was built at Inanda Seminary. That in itself was proved to me, because when it was time for me to give back I did not even hesitate. But it has also, in my own experience, wherever I've been, whether in my own church—because I belong to the Lutheran Church, and I am very, very involved, I haven't even mentioned that—but all this has been built in my association with Inanda Seminary, though even in my own church [I worship] as a Lutheran. Inanda Seminary—and McCord Hospital, which was an extension of Inanda Seminary both as an institution, as a brother institution, but also as a UCCSA church institution—it has shaped me. The academic side of Inanda Seminary—you know, the missionaries gave all, without holding back anything to us, and that is something of which we are proud, and which has been shared, all those things, and that which we are also very, very grateful that we can pass it on.

Bongikile (Makhoba) Dhlomo
Inanda Seminary Student, 1951-1952

You know, the enthusiasm of passing it on to the younger children who go on at Inanda... The Christian faith and the code of conduct that we have, and the adherence to that code of conduct, has helped Inanda grow and made it what it is.