

Mamsie Ntshangase.
Inanda Seminary student, 1977-1981.
Interviewed in Durban, 12 June 2010.

One of the reasons that you went to Inanda is because your cousin taught there, okay. Was your cousin teaching at Inanda when you were a student there or at an earlier time there?

Yes. She ended up being principal, at, I think this was after we had been there. She is Lucky Zulu.

Oh, I have not interviewed her.

You have?

I have not.

Actually, I've been trying to get out of her. She's the one that I was actually hoping would join us here. Because she was a student also and then she came back to teach, you know—

So are you related to Reverend Dlodla, then as well? Because isn't she a relative—

My uncle is her father. So on our mother's side.

I see. I thought she was related to Reverend Dlodla as well.

Yes, well through her mother.

The other side of the family. I see.

It all comes together.

Yeah a lot of these Inanda Seminary families seem to be related in some way, which is quite interesting.

So she was a teacher at Inanda at the time.

Yes.

All right, so what were some of your sort of first impressions at Inanda? Were you excited to attend?

Well, I was. But as a youngster then it was intimidating, to be away from home. And, gosh, we were terrified. The first month was terrifying, you know there's that initiation process that goes on [laughs] so I used to escape to her house quite a bit and cry my heart out there. But she was always encouraging me, 'Hang in there.' But we soon got quite excited about being there. First thing we got there was the English rule.

Right.

Then all the rest follows. You were—we were taught from the beginning that how we fare, and our success lies entirely in our hands, so a whole lot of responsibility was passed on to us, really. Which I later on quite appreciated because we got to be self-starters and we actually were every proud that we were in control of our destiny as it were, so that became one of the most important influences in how I view the world. And we were told very very early to be assertive – stand your ground, you know. Especially in what you believe. And at that time, at that period, that became very very crucial.

Right.

At that time, it was the seventies, and the fact that Inanda was a private school gave us access to books that were otherwise not accessed by other students and we were taught by people who did not have any—what would I call it? —who at that time were mostly anti-establishment, I would say, but who had none of what we are living with, really. The black-white divide. Especially the American teachers.

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Yeah so, which American staff members were around when you were at Inanda?
Carol Gunn.

Carol Gunn was there. Yeah, she's been mentioned-
Our math teacher.

She's been mentioned by a lot of people as being influential.
She was very, very influential. She was our math teacher. I remember at that time, because we were students, we used to hate that she knew every car that brought students back from holiday and she would stand there at the gate on the day we returned. You're still so excited. Who would be wanting to be given homework on the day of your arrival? You're still going to mingle, greet, catch up about what did you do over the holidays. And there she is, 'Good evening, welcome back.' And she would hand you the script like, 'Tonight, I want this tomorrow,' a whole range of math problems to solve on the day you returned to school. Again that taught us.

To be a self-starter, to be organized.
To get on with it. That's what we were there for after all.

Yeah, people told me that her pedagogy was very good. Made math very intelligible and a lot of her students went on to become doctors, were very empowered in that regard.
Later on, Ms. Roy.

Ok, I was trying to remember when, because I interviewed her actually. I interviewed her in Connecticut, in the States where she lives now. I was trying to remember when she came and if she would have overlapped with you at all.
See, after high school, I went back in 1984 to the secretarial school.

So you came back to Inanda.
I came back, so I knew her from that period.

The secretarial schools seemed kind of interesting to me because there were somewhat older students that were sort of more world-wise and such. What was the interaction between high school students and secretarial students?

We had a love-hate relationship. We always lived to trouble those as high school. There was that divide because they brought in discipline. A lot of them were married.

Yeah, they were a lot older, so—
We envied the fact that they had permission to leave over weekends to go to their homes. So we enjoyed causing trouble for them. Because we at some point we shared a dormitory... They used to have their right-side wing at the bottom and we were all up there, at this side of the dormitory. So we used to raise hell... We were quite rebellious, I think. Our group and things that we were, in the student body were tradition. We used to love going against that tradition.

Why do you think it was, just because of the general time that you were at school, in terms of what was

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going on in the country?

Yeah, but not in a destructive way. There was kind of this tradition that the matric students would go out to Ohlange students, or any other high school boys who were from all these other schools there was Mariannahill, Ohlange of course which is nearby. You drove past it.

Yeah, I've been to the campus of Ohlange, Mariannahill and Adams. All of them.

Those were the top high schools in the community and a whole lot of leaders were, been there. So we broke that tradition, we bunked it really. So there was no one going out with any Ohlange boy.

So did you go out with other boys from the community.

No, no in fact, that was a no-no. It was just a no-no. You were big, not really, so you would not even tell your parents. These are the things that are traditionally, they became quite taboo. Don't even talk about 'Now it's time for you to have a boyfriend, Mom I've met this guy.' You would never, you would not dare. But we quite enjoyed interacting with them. Especially when we got a play at coed school. They, would come, the boys would come and help us with softball practice. Because we were, we had to play against that school, it doesn't matter that they were not filled with girls simply because it was Inanda.

So you would play against the boys.

So we played against the boys and we quite enjoyed coaching one over them. And we did beat quite a few. I think they would be – they took it lightly and we would always surprise them. It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun. And we – the game quite improved. Again, I played a lot of sport, I played quite a lot. One the incentive was that the students who represented the school would not pay for trips, because you were in the team, which was very important if you wanted to get out of the school to go play, because we did not always have the money. So I got to play everything with a bat, everything with a racket except netball. I didn't like netball. I loved basketball, so I played that quite a lot. But the important thing is, as mischievous though we were, we never lost sight of why we were there. We were quite strict when it came to schoolwork. So we would make a lot of noise just to aggravate the matron... She taught us a lot. From making the bed to telling the difference between a male shirt and a female shirt, where the button is. Left over right, or right over left. All those little things. And etiquette, you know, how you conduct yourself at table, etc. Of course all those words of wisdom, she played very much our parents' role, our mothers. Strict disciplinarian. Oh! Yeah, we also enjoyed giving her grief, but the important thing is that whatever she taught us sank in, as much as we loved to poke fun at her, etcetera. You know when you're on your own and it's so bad, you realize, know it's actually the right thing to do. We would have teachers go on three-month sabbaticals overseas. Especially on those difficult subjects such as physics and math, but we were always very, very orderly.

You were very what? Orderly?

Yeah you would never tell that there isn't a teacher in that classroom, because we had. Each class had its own chairlady who maintained discipline there. And the teacher would leave a whole range—they would leave a range of work for us to cover in their absence. And I think we used to do a lot better when they were there because you know it was like, this is in our hands now.

You were able to organize yourself, exactly.

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Even when we had test. The first thing when the scripts come back, our chair-lady would, we would sit there from front-left and you would call out your percentage, 'What did you get?' and anything less than 60 percent was frowned upon. And those kids would give you a lot of hell. I think we were stricter among ourselves even more than our parents and teachers. We were constantly reminded of why we were there and how much it cost, because Inanda was one of the most expensive by our standards. It was a lot of money for our parents to pay and we were always very, very conscious of that fact. So you see, we could not afford to fail. Failure was not an option for any of us.

And when you were a student there, it was also quite difficult to get into Inanda, to begin with. It was still very selective.

Yeah. I think it helped. You know when I was still in private school and Lucky was still in university she studied art, literature, that type of thing. I think she majored in one of the African languages and Afrikaans, or something, because those were the subjects that she taught at Inanda. I used to pinch a lot of her books. And this would be around when I was in grade three, four, five. You know, I would read a book without comprehending 'What on earth does this word mean?' So I would just read. But there were a lot of fascinating books. When I started to comprehend, I locked myself—I read a lot, which I think helped me in my entrance exam to Inanda, because those were one of the questions they would ask. 'What books do you read. What books have you read?' So I started quoting her books I had read of hers, because those were the most recent in memory and that kind of shocked them because they only encountered those authors at university and they could not believe—

Yeah, before you were in high school.

'You've read Milton?' 'Yeah.' So I think they got quite excited. So I think that clinched it for me. Apart from the reports, my grades from primary school. So that culture of excellence was already there. So when I got there it was like a continuation. And then of course we had that library.

Yeah I know, which at that time was very rare in South Africa.

Yes, and also the kind of books they had in there. I still regret, and I'm working very hard to collect once again, all the books I read in that library. Especially the African Writers Series that has since disappeared. Some of the best writers to come out of Africa, that library was full of them. And it disappointed a lot that all those books have disappeared there.

Were any of those books banned in South Africa?

They were, a number of them were. It used to thrill me, that we actually had them as set works, some of them. But of course we would never write the formal exam, the government controlled exams on those. Those were like extra to the curriculum but the fact that we had access to them. And then we would talk to the other kids back home about them. It was like a new world opening up to us, and to them. You know we were at a different level, really, compared to students from other schools. And you could tell, even today you can still tell from what opens your mouth. That this has got to be an Inanda girl. We can almost tell, really, almost immediately. I don't know about the lot that's coming out now. There have been a lot of things that disappoint us each time we visit. We have, at home, the annual speech day.

Yeah, I went last year. And I also went to the 140th anniversary, and I was very fortunate that I happened to be there for that because I met a lot of older members who wouldn't have come out otherwise.

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Oh, did you interview them?

Yeah, I interviewed Lauretta Ngcobo and Bongzi Dhlomo, and a couple of others. The oldest woman I interviewed went to Inanda in the 1930s. Her name was Caroline Sililo. She was a teacher there. I made a lot of interesting connections with some older members.

I was actually hoping. I haven't heard from Thuli's aunt. She was also instrumental in the—

Was she one of the committee of ten?

Yes. I think she was doing a lot of insight at that period because we were very concerned. We were already out of school and there were all of these upheavals. I think for me that's when things started to really unravel. For instance, you go back there, you find graffiti on walls. We would never do that. I suppose that's the signs of the times, etcetera. There were things that you simply would not do. We would have loved if that were to continue. You know after you leave there, you appreciate it more, what Inanda has done for you. As rebellious as though you may be, you come out, you get out here, the world is harsher than that protective cocoon that is Inadna. And then you look at how other kids behave and you actually wish you were back in there far from that. Because it's not as if we – as much as we were keen to get out there, you know check out there, check out the world. Reality kind of bites. [Laughs]

So when you were there, what did most of your peers want to do as careers? Was it mostly medical professions that were appealing to people then?

And with the upheavals, law was one of the more appealing career options, and science. I think it helped also that maths was compulsory. Because for other schools, I think it was an option. And a whole lot of students did not take it because it was an option. I was not particularly very good, unfortunately. I think we were taught from Standard Six to Eight by Mrs. Zondi, who was quite intimidating.

Yeah, yeah. I interviewed Mrs. Zondi as well.

She was very intimidating, but very patient with those who could not keep up, really. Until it started Nine and Ten we had Roberts. Only then did my math improve. He had a way of making things a lot more clearer, which I quite appreciated. And then for history we had Richard Duma.

I've heard him mentioned by several people.

Oh that guy, he was one of those, he really brought the real world to us. Especially during that period. Very soft-spoken. But he was an excellent history teacher. And those were the things that really inculcated the passion for reading. Really internalizing things. You would not read simply because the teacher said so. You learned. And you applied things in real life. So for me that was really, really important. And then he headed the debating society.

Did you take part in that?

Yes.

That seems like sort of across the schools, since the twenties and thirties, that it's been a big and important thing.

Yeah, you kind of learned to express yourself and on topics, stand your ground, on what you believed in. And the culture of learning, to agree, to disagree we learned a lot. We became tolerant of other people's views, and respecting their right to have that view. Which is why

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you know observing what later happened in this country before Mandela was released—the intolerance for the political parties, yeah. So a lot of debates this country has been stifled. That's why I've been outside the ANC which to us at the time were the flag-bearers of truth. And the right for us to be free. We were vociferous in our opposition of such because a lot of those people—it's a reality, it's an unfortunate reality, a lot of them were supporters of the government.

At the time that you were at Inanda, Inkatha was of course establishing quite a significant presence in a lot of schools. The women's brigade was formed on Inanda's campus. How did Inkatha interact with students at Inanda? Because I heard they didn't get a very welcoming reception.

No, no, no, they didn't. They did not, definitely not. We would laugh—they could not stand about the student's opinions, in their views. The students out-debated them and it was very, very embarrassing for them. It was really embarrassing. And I think we were not happy at—I don't think the students would have allowed even that conference to take place, had they known the intention. Don't think it was well-articulated. Our outlook at the time was quite militant. A number of students actually had their parents incarcerated. It was a lot of grief. A lot of, a number of students at the school were harassed by police just for carrying a name associated with one hothead or 'terrorist' as they were called at the time. We had Faith in our group. Faith Mashinini, who happened to be related to the student leader Tsietsi Mashinini. He was a very inspiring leader. And the security police would come to our school, lock her up the entire day, and a day missed. A day of school missed, it disrupt everything, because our minds were, 'What are they doing to her?' They were asking her questions about Tsietsi. That is when she had to skip the country, ended up living in Liberia. So we were exposed to all these things. I mean, I come from a very rural area. We were—back there—we were, the community was far removed from what was happening in the townships especially Soweto. We were very conscious. I talked to the kids around there about what was happening and they would be like, 'Huh?' And wow. And of course, information was very limited. The newspapers were controlled by government. There was no TV at the time. TV started in 19-

76.

In this country, and it would close at midnight and they would sing there the national anthem, would be played there. I remember we would be singing *Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika* at the time, by ourselves, so all these things that were not allowed, we would do. And teachers would smuggle activists into our school to come and address us.

Like what activists?
Political activists.

Do you remember any one in particular?

Who was that guy that came—a number of them, we were told later, you see, that he was part of [the struggle]. We would have a person come and address us about what is happening and what we as students need to do. Not disrupt or destroy the school, etc., but you know this is what is happening and we would be made aware and be conscious of things that are happening around you. Later on, we would learn that it was actually so and so. And you would read in the paper and learn that that man [who had addressed you] maybe was being arrested. There was Jabulani Ngcobo.

What was the name? Jabulani?

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Yeah. He ended up on Robben Island for about ten years, and we spoke to him after he came out. I think when Nkosazana Zuma was still in exile some of her kids lived at Jabulani's home. So we had interaction with such people, but by and large, it's the books that really influenced our outlook. We had this kind of competition. See, the section on African writers was wall to wall, so you took it and come December, from January to December, you would have read all the books in that section, and then move on to the next. It was fascinating, and then there was this competition about how quickly you could finish Alex Haley's *Roots*. That is a big book.

Yeah, it's a large book.

I can almost tell you, to this day. I started reading that book. Because, there was one copy, and you can imagine the entire student body trying to read that book. So, because we got by on very little sleep, whoever had a book we were interested in. It was tough reading after lights-out, you would go and sit near the window that has the outside light and read, and read through that as your light or you would have a torch from home and read under covers. So that's how I finished that book. Every night, I used to steal it from whoever was reading it. From under the pillow—I would pull it out quietly as they were fast asleep and start reading. So I started on a Thursday, and I finished that book on a Tuesday.

That was really quick.

That was really good. I used to read very, very fast. I was a very fast reader.

Yeah, and do you remember other books that were very influential or especially popular?

Oh yes. Our set work at Standard Nine was *God's Bits of Wood*.

Oh, really?

Sembene Ousmane. I've been searching for that guy's books forever. And then of course, Achebe Chinua, *Things Fall Apart*. And Ngugi wa Thiong'o was one of the most—I think among us students, his books had the most impact because he was writing about the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, and during that time those books were for us—Like that *God's Bits of Wood*. The community protesting the railway, all those changes to people's life, the disruption of people's lives. Then of course there were the local authors and poets, also Mtshali's poetry was rousing. These are all—and the *Staffrider* magazine, all these influenced our outlook really.

And who was teaching English at the time that you were at Inanda?

Mrs. Mqwebu, yes. Later on, Esther Sangweni. Who also was part of that Committee [that revitalized Inanda in the 1990s].

Esther Sangweni. I interviewed her as well.

Yeah?

She was a librarian before you were a student there, I think, right?

No, she was—

She was still there. So it was Kozi who was the librarian then. She's a fun lady. I interviewed her. She's very talkative, she had a lot to tell me.

We had our reunion at the home of 2008 or 2007, so most of my class came back there. It was absolutely amazing. And the following year, we came here, because we decided, you know as a

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class of '81 what can we do for the school? Well, the guys were all up: 'Let's paint Phelps Hall. Because we had one of the most wonderful memories of our time at that hall. We spent most of our years in Phelps Hall, there was a whole lot of anecdotes about that place. So we were there, the wooden floors, the matron lived below and walking and stomping on those, we used to drive her nuts.

I can see that.

We had this thing about—there was a, I don't know what you would call it, but we would dance... That stomping, we used to call it... We had a language there was a language of Inanda students that was all our own. I remember one of my students would call me at home, over the phone. I would have an audience, she would have an audience at the other end, because they would not understand, 'What does that mean?' And we were talking about, like, chicken. I would never to this day know why it was called Elvis. If someone goes home for the weekend for whatever reason—They would be ask, 'Hey, bring Elvis.' [Laughs]... We had a whole lot of terms that we used there, and going home was called home-go. And coming back was called school-come. So we would count down the days when we would go. We would sing about it. How many days before home-go, you know. And we would sing from dining hall all the way to studies in the evenings. We would be chanting and singing, every member who's been to that school knows those, to this day. And that was always our highlight, going to that home, singing the school song, that's our highlight, beyond the speeches, etcetera etcetera. Even when we do go there, we would chat about ourselves, only coming from this school, so it's about to be—one thing that is now a disappointment, the current students don't sing very well. Oh my goodness. We were shocked. The first time at our reunion here, there we were, it's time for our highlight, these kids start, monotone, everyone is singing is singing soprano, in different ranges, vocal ranges, what?! We stop singing, we were so shocked, we looked at them and they don't know the words. That was another shock. We were so angry at them. Because that's one of the things you get taught, you know it by heart. So we were outraged, 'What on earth is wrong with you guys?' And they couldn't see what was wrong. So when we came there we were telling them about the first bell rang at five o' clock in the morning and they were like 'What?' which means these things don't happen anymore. There is no longer morning study, I understand, because at 6 we would be at study, and that means we were already in uniform.

That's quite early.

You had a bath, cold water, and no showers down there. It no longer exists. I took a whole lot of photographs and we were looking at all these things. As much as there should be progress, you kind of wish—this is my life, part of my life there is gone, I cannot see this. You kind of wish you cannot see this. Oh, we used to do this thing here, and it is no longer there. And you would be so disappointed. Like, it should have been there. There were some atrocious conditions, but this was our life. We used to do our washing, there at the taps. Now it's no more. You know. And no showers are cold, of course. Run down, loosening the steps and run down to get to the shower before someone else. Come back, get dressed quickly. Six o' clock first bell rings for study at second bell everyone is supposed to be seated and quiet and reading. After 6, you go to breakfast, at 7 its chapel, then school starts. And apparently they only wake up to do breakfast and go.

Yeah, chapel's at 7 or 7:30. Still quite early, but not quite early as when you all started.

And then there was Campus Care, on Saturday. Every student had a chore allocated. Whether

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it's scrubbing floors in your own dormitory, or other area at your dormitory, depending on our classes and age, etcetera, and seniority, tasks were allocated. And now they have a cleaning company.

Yeah, they do have professional cleaners.

We did everything ourselves. The only thing we did not do there is cook... And that is where, those ladies, they adored us. And we had the biggest mamas there. Auntie Clay. We used to call her Auntie Clay. We used to joke, she was always clean-shaven. I think she was Sotho, because Sotho do that. It's kind of a tradition with them. They would sneak extra food if you were in there, or sneak you hot water.

That would be even better, I think.

At winter time [laughs], just taking a cold shower wasn't the best, but we would steal water from the kitchen. Or maybe get someone to distract them while we fill the bucket and sneak out. Those used to be the thrills. That's the kind of mischief we would get out. Now I hear some of the students drink. All these things were just taboo to us. We would just not do these things. And even smoke. Going out of that school was a very, very rare occasion. You would either leave because there is a school trip, or you are a part of a debating team that's got to go debate against—have a debate with a particular school. Or you had an ailment that required hospital perhaps. Or you had to go and renew or get a pair of glasses, those that had eye problems. But it was very, very rare... But a lot of our lives really were shaped by being at that school.

Yeah. What do you remember about Mrs. Koza became principal near the end of your time there.
Woah! [Laughs]

It seems there was a major difference between her leadership style and that of Baba Zondi who was there before you and Mr. Lewis, who was there in between.

She came in there very forthright, very fresh. We actually protested her arrival. That was the first time Inanda had a strike of sorts. It was unheard of, it was a shock to all the teachers. We were sent home.

That was in 1980.

We were sent home with lots of, and we had to come back with our parents to apologize to her. There was an evening where we took anything and everything that we could. We were planning to beat her up. Anything to chase her away, because we wanted Mr. Lewis. Oh, Mr. Lewis.

So what was Mr. Lewis like? I've never met him.

Very kind. He's fatherly.. Then there was this very—to us Ma Koza was very arrogant and very fresh and very authoritative. There was just resentment of her presence there. So there was protest.

Yeah. So when your class left Inanda were they kind of bitter about their experience at the school?
Yes, yes.

Some people have suggested that in the early 80's you guys were kind of -
Others, others ended up continuing at other schools and they did not return. And some of

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those kind of cut off any link with Inanda which was a pity. They were very beaten that they were expelled. Others' parents just decided I can't have a child not be at a school, so while they are dillydallying about getting us back there, get on with work, schoolwork. So they started attending other schools. And it was quite a shock to their systems because there was just no schooling happening. One girl for instance went to—which school did she go to? She wrote to us to say, 'Guys, I'm the star at this school. They think I'm from another planet. We are covering - they are still at chapter 1 of physics.' Or something. We had already revised our entire syllabus. It was like, what?! So she was like walking on water, in fact that was the same view of all the others who did not return. And also the style of marking at Inanda where at primary school, when you're on top of this class you're number one and maybe they have the same marks as the next person, so you'd both be position one. At Inanda there was no such. If you both, or one or two or three of you had the same percentage, I don't know if they did a kind of lottery of if they would pick you by alphabetical order of your surnames, so you'd all have the same percentage, you'd have 92% or something, and you would end up being position four because my surname is N and the first would be B, so we soon got to learn to not be beat up about that. So what was important was how well did you do at each subject and you would focus on improving that mark, not the position. So when I got together with my friends from primary school who were leading now in their respective high schools. So for the first time they're hearing that Mamsie was not first, my goodness. There are people out there who are cleverer than you. It wasn't until we would get down into the nitty gritty, 'Okay, what did you get for English' '52' 'What?' You would dead at Inanda, so I made a lot of enemies. And we had this thing, even those percentages, even if you had a B, don't be happy. Depends what side of 70% it is, between 70 and 79, it's B. Between 80 and 100 it's A. Fine, but you have 70 and 75, 76 to 79, it's B minus this side, B plus. We would call it like that. Anyone who had a minus, it felt bad. So whatever you used to do, you'd strive to get a plus. Hopefully A plus. So the standard was always that high. We would never have anything close to a C minus. What? You need to pull up your socks. Even before the teacher tells you, we would be the worst. I told you, let's go the library and read this, and you didn't, you chose to read that novel. You see now? So by the time the teacher starts to shout at you, you've already been dealt with by your fellow students. So we used to keep each other in line, which was good. It was really good.

So what did you do after Inanda? Where did you go to university?

I couldn't because I couldn't get a bursary and my father couldn't send me to varsity. I still believe it wasn't because of lack of funds because he worked very hard and he had the money. Unfortunately he had a particular attitude towards things. At my matric time, it was a particularly difficult period in our family, so we got caught in the middle of whatever disputes there were. So I think we couldn't go to varsity out of spite, really, which was a pity. So oh, and there was this problem with our matric results that year.

Mmm-hmm, in '81.

In '81. That was a disaster. And, as whatever efforts Mrs. Koza put to get the department to remark our scripts, there was just no way we would have even told that there is, the department apparently said that there was evidence that we all had the same answers, which means we copied. It tortured me at no end, because I spent all of '82 at home, waiting for my script to be remarked. It was one of the most traumatic periods of my life, only to have them tell me at the end of the year that the marks remained unchanged. Because I was so confident, yes, okay, I had lost a year but the scripts, all these things are remarked, this thing is going to be over, I was going to go to varsity, and based on my marks I expect to get, I should get a

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bursary. Because I was already clear that my father was never going to pay. So it was devastating for that to happen. So I had to register in '83 to rewrite the same subjects. And in the meantime, to keep myself occupied, I worked at some retail store, while writing these papers. And then coming back to teach matriculants in the area. Informally of course. But everything I was talking about was just Greek to them. Again, that was just the standard between ourselves as Inanda girls. And in 1980 I went back to the school because there was just no question of me matriculating elsewhere. So my father -

That was in 1983?

In 1980. After that strike. My father just said, you have to go back there. There was just no question of me being anywhere else, I couldn't. I couldn't even think of which school I would want to be. So we went back, we apologized even though we felt we were right. We did as our parents told us, go back there and apologize, get on with work. So we went to Mrs. Koza, we were sorry, we don't know what we were doing. Privately, we knew exactly what we were doing.

Yeah, that's got to be difficult.

We had quite a fractious relationship. It improved, though, afterwards. She is a darling once you really get to know her. And she did quite a lot for the school. She would bring a van full of fruit and we would have a week full of extra fruit, oranges or whatever. And she raised quite a lot of funds for the school. And she was instrumental in the building of the new dormitory.

Yeah, she did. She did a lot. I've interviewed her. She is quite elderly now.
She is. And she recently lost her daughter.

Yeah.

That was sad. So I actually was very fortunate because even long after they had left Inanda, we would meet at people's funerals around here. She's here, and she knew this family, etcetera. So we chat. We ended up being quite alright with one another. And again, with hindsight you appreciate the things that she did. She was very influential on a number of members who remained after, who matriculated in '85, thereabouts, and beyond.

I've talked to a couple of people who did find her to be a good role model, and good mentor. So perhaps her style changed a little bit over the time she was there, or people's expectations changed. So you went to the secretarial school?

In '84. My cousin suggested I come back there so that I can have some—because this debate that was going on at home was not helping me much. I needed to have a qualification of sorts. So she suggested seeing as your father is being what is, come here do the secretarial course, and maybe when you start working, you can put yourself through. You can study privately. So I went back in '84, did the secretarial course. And then I started working immediately, like in February of the following year I started working and you know our, those days it was still very very difficult.

It was the State of Emergency.

State of Emergency... Salaries were nothing to be rightful about. So it became harder to save enough, for varsity tuition... I did not have access to a university where I could attend in the evenings... So I transferred to the Durban branch and a different department of the company I worked for. I still work for that company.

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And what company is this?

... It's Ithala.

I-T-H-A. L-A?

Development Finance. It's the development of the KwaZulu-Natal government. We're focused on developing industry, the small business people around here. One of the biggest men was, in terms of industrial net and space, and we finance projects. I don't know if you've been to Wilson's Wharf.

I have.

Yeah, that's Ithala Development. That was developed by the Ithala. We're a very successful properties department where government channels funds for the building of clinics and schools through Ithala, and Ithala project managers manage those funds. They have contractor's speed for work, to build these schools, etceteras. And they are managed in a very orderly fashion, because they are qualified project managers there, engineers, you name it, all range of skills. So I ended up there, in the IT department. I work for IT. We have, the IT department heading the network side of things. And the support of desktops. Anywhere there is an Ithala branch there is a computer.

So you went to school in Durban there.

Yes, I attended at it was then called Natal Tech. So I did my IT diploma there. And since then it's been a series of IT certification to do with networking, etcetera. That's basically turned out to be a career. I had intended to study law at varsity. But fate decreed otherwise, I suppose so.

Is there anything else you wanted to emphasize about your experience at Inanda in terms of your feelings about attending an all-girls school? Any other reflections?

No, it was one of the best things to happen, really. And I quite appreciate having been at that school at that time. And it really has shaped our lives fundamentally. A whole lot of things that I know today I learned there, and I try as much as possible to apply them to my day to day life. So I quite appreciate Inanda. And this thing of maintaining relationships and friendships.

Yeah that seems very striking.

You can meet an Inanda girl, you will recognize. Maybe you may have forgotten her name.

But you can tell.

But you can strike up a conversation like yesterday. That network, that bond, that exists among ourselves, runs to this day and will probably do until we die. We are still very much in contact. We love talking about it. Every first of March we phone each other and we sing as a group.

You sing as a group?

We sing the school song, because it's the birthday. The Ma Edwards song. [Laughs] They probably told you about the first of March for new students.

No, I don't.

All students pretend they are Ma Edward's ghosts, every year. That was one thing, part of the initiation for new students. Every first of March at night. You see, all of you guys. Ma Edwards

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is coming to visit you because you are new here. So you are supposed to put biscuits and sweets under your pillow.

I hadn't heard about that.

Really?! Oh my goodness, that was tradition. We would be scared out of our wits. So at time, this guy, it's the same, it's the students. His calamine lotion on their faces, so their faces look white. Black nail polish, they look grotesque. And maybe even a sherbet, or Koolaid. Like the strawberry one makes your tongue really red. Oh they do that.

Scary.

Tried to make ourselves as scary. Wrap yourselves around white sheets. Creep and walk like a ghost. Ma Edwards was chanting, 'Slowly I come, slowly I come.' And if you don't have those cookies, or sweets, they would pretend to strangle you. Like the ghost, you know the myth about ghosts that ghosts will strangle you. That was tradition. And of course every first of March we would be in Sunday uniform, that black and white, and the school tie. Ours was striped like so.

The purple stripes?

Yeah, I like that tie. I suppose I'm a stickler for tradition. We would go to the cemetery, have a prayer there, sing the school song. Sing at her grave, etcetera and come back. Have the Sunday hot breakfast. Those were the highlights. And then, speech day.

That was an important thing too.

The excitement of going outside school.

Yeah, that's right because you didn't get to go outside campus very often so that would be quite exciting.
Yeah. Those were the thrills at the time.

It's interesting.

That was basically it. We try as much as possible to do things to help the school. But I don't know if this thing will ever end. We always talk about this divide. It's probably our kids, or their kids who will experience a truly integrated type of society. Our generation is still quite hung up on the past. You can't ignore the realities. We are products of that time. It's always there, as much as we try to maybe pretend it's not happening, it's always there. Apartheid has moved post-94 to the corridors of business. It may not be as overt, and things may not be stated categorically like they used to. You know you remember like yesterday the adverts for employment. I always wish I had kept those newspapers. There's an ad for, you read through it, she's a qualified, I can do all this. At the bottom: Europeans only. Yeah, so it's difficult to—

Yeah, I found at the school files, at the archives at Inanda, some letters that staff members like Carol Gunn, and such, had written in support of students who wanted to study at white universities in the 70s. That's another interesting thing about your generation. It seems that a lot of your classmates were some of the first black women to attend, you know UCT and Vits and it was very difficult to do, legally.
You had to apply to a minister. For instance once there was an Indian university. If you wanted to take a degree there - read for a degree, you had to apply to the ministry of India first, and they would always recommend that you attend a bush college. They used to call them bush colleges. Recommend you go to Zululand, University of the North, or Fort Hare. So we were limited. There were not many options, and you would be restricted to what you can study...

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In fact, as matrics we were always advised not go to University of Zululand to study BSE because no person passes there.

Yeah there were very few graduates in science.

People ended up opting for BA's and majoring in history or biblical studies and they created a generation of not very industrious graduates, because there's a working world out there that requires certain skills, so it's been a series of such, the culture of learning here has been determined by some more than a person's ability. And the lack of access to materials that would make you a better-skilled person, which is a tragedy. No one could ever calculate the damage this has caused, anyway. We lived through that. We used to have these conversations. Because Inanda used to debate a lot with the St. Mary's School for girls.

St. Mary's School, okay.

And we would go through. They would look at what we were studying. It's a white school, by the way. So it used to be a thrill to beat them at debates, because again our advantage was that we were very aware of what was happening. There, as whites were very insulated from what was happening right under their noses. And of course, very conveniently so, which is why no one today can ever acknowledge that they supported apartheid. None, never. You'd be hard-pressed to find any white person here today that supported all these things. But all these things happened in their name. It's one of the things that always brings up heated debates, because they are always saying we are full of grudges and we don't want to forget.

But it's very recent.

Yeah, and if someone inflicts pain on you, it's harder for you to forget. They want you to quickly forget and move on. So you'll find from conversations that they are at a certain grade of studying things that are being studied by girls that are two grades ahead of us. So we were always very aware of that gap. Hence, our teacher, our physics teacher used to tell us, Mrs. Tembu, now she was Ms. Sipuka.

Sorry how do you spell the name?

S-I-P-U-K-A. She married Tembu. She is now Mrs. Tembu. She used to search physics papers at especially at trial exams, at mark exams. She would search us, difficult papers where if you get like 52% and you are already so mad that you got a 50, and then she would say, 'Congratulations, it means you will pass BSE.' Those questions were from a physics paper at varsity. If you passed. So the level was always very, very high. For English, yes, at standard nine, David Brown.

Yeah, I've heard his name mentioned as being a very good teacher.

He actually taught at Inanda. He escaped conscription. And the day he received the letter, they had tracked him down. And this we did not know. He just came into our class and cried and showed us the letter. And remember their punishment, if they were caught. He went to teach at Inanda to avoid going to the army, and they caught up with him. So that letter demanded that he report to whatever whatever, because if they catch you, the whites who would spend two years in military prison, and apparently those were not the best.

So what did he do? Did he go to prison?

No!

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Or did he go into exile? What did he do?

We told him, we just told him, 'Let them come fetch you.' You are not going anywhere, you are going to die here... We were waiting to be arrested with him. I don't know how we got past that one, but we finished the year with him. I don't now what they said in response, I don't really know. But his brother had successfully managed to get himself to the UK to avoid the same thing.

Yeah, it would be interesting to track down David Brown. Because I know he was married to a historian named Heather Hughes, who published an article about Inanda's history, and I've never met her, but I've been in touch with her via email about various archival issues and stuff like that. And I don't know if they are still married, but they were married at the time when he was teaching at Inanda. I think that's how she got interested in Inanda. So it would be interesting to see what became of him. I find very interesting the white South Africans who taught at Inanda like in the 60's and 70's and 80's because it seems like it's a very interesting kind of politically-aware cohort of people who felt that they were really making a difference in terms of connections between white and black South Africans, it's interesting generational kind of thing. It's intriguing.

They would make no bones about your status. But if you look at that president who said that the education of black people should be structured in a way that they remain—and it was institutionalized. Even to this day, a child who we know excels at rugby, that was to find a place at Sharks Academy. That's invited to talk with the kids at the schools, but will never make the final team. That still happens, same with cricket. I have got a whole lot of friends whose kids are absolutely excellent. They end up, and maybe want to pursue a professional cricketing career. Never make it at that class at that academy there. Same with rugby. The brother to this boy who is at Harvard, that excellent rugby player. He was at Michaelhouse. Watch that boy play. He would just catch, sway through all the opposition, knock down all those. Was part of the case, doing all the rugby. Guess who's at the Sharks Team right now? The boy who came to Michaelhouse after him. And he was all there in that mix. It's going to be a while before you get, it is why we have had one prominent black cricketer for years until they forced him out of the team again. How can a country this big, with all the millions of people, one black cricketer for all these years, one recognized fast-baller. It's impossible. It's subtle, it's very much present. But anyway, we'll see. [Laughs]