

# Part 1: From Childhood to the End of High School

## My Grandparents

In order to deal with my family, I have to start with the oldest member that I know in the family. My grandfather, Abel (Maphungwana) Mazibuko was Zulu and came from the towns of Escourt and Weenen in Natal. He had two brothers, Masihlabisane and Chithi. It never was mentioned when he came to Port Elizabeth, but I do know that he worked at Lennon's Laboratories, the same company I eventually worked for. My grandfather was a religious man and conducted the choir at the Presbyterian Church. While employed at Lennon's he studied theology and became a minister at the same church. For a partner, he chose a divorced lady called Mrs. Krabi, who was from Alexandria. She bore him three children, my father Alexander Constantine Yedwa, Nontombi Alice and Bruce Dlabemncisha Douglas.



*Reverend Abel Mazibuko, my grandfather*

When my grandfather presented his wife to his parents, she was not welcome among the Zulus because she was of the Mfengu tribe, a Mamfene. This manifested itself in her in-laws denying her all meals. Hence, when she gave birth to a third child, the relatives teased her by naming him "Dlabemncisha" ("they eat and give him nothing"). It is clear that my grandfather had resided in the areas of Morija and Makhotlong, before his first son was born. In protest to this latest treatment, my grandfather moved from South Africa to settle in Leso-

tho, in Mokhotlong permanently.

In those days this was all one country. It would seem that my grandfather was never entirely detached from Escourt or the nearby village of Mangweni. However, two of his children were born while he resided in Lesotho. During the early period of residence in Lesotho, my grandmother would take trips to Escourt to visit. On one of these trips, my father, the first son, was born at Mt. Ayliff in the Transkei. This story is from my father. The result was that my father spoke Sesotho from childhood and had to learn Xhosa and Xhosa clans later in adulthood.

## **My father**

My father Alexander Yedwa grew up looking after the sheep and cattle of the family in Lesotho. When he was ten years old, his father died after a sickness. His mother requested him to inform the neighborhood of his father's death by calling the elders together.

My grandfather had used the last name of Maphungwana in his lifetime but used the clan name of Mazibuko on the land he owned in Port Elizabeth. He had a plot of land for himself and another for his mother-in-law.

As the land in Port Elizabeth was the only home they had, my grandmother was forced to take her family by train back to Port Elizabeth. When my father, who was the eldest son, grew up to claim the land, he had to change his last name to Mazibuko.

My father had already done the Third Standard in Lesotho in Makhotlong and examined by an authority in Morija, by the time he came to Port Elizabeth. In Korsten, Port Elizabeth he progressed to pass Standard Six at a Methodist Church School. In those days such education was regarded as sufficient for suitable employment. Educational vacancies involved mostly domestic work. At this stage he had to leave school in order to support the family and he never went back. The family lived in what is now the area of Korsten.

My father grew up to be a preacher in the Presbyterian Church.

My mother once visited my grandmother's house, while my father was a young working man. My grandmother saw her and chose her to be my father's future wife, even though my father had a girlfriend. Soon after this, my grandmother died and my father had to

honor her wishes.

In order to be accepted in his new surroundings, my father joined a rugby team called *The Red Rovers*, and played as a wing. He purchased some books that described Xhosa clans to familiarize himself with different clan-descriptions which were expected of a man. He went through all the necessary Xhosa customs and recognized them all.

When political difficulties presented themselves my father did secretly join a political group.

Until his death, I had never known my father to administer physical punishment on any of his children. Instead he could cook, when my mother was at work, and even clean up all children in preparation for Sunday School each time. Cleaning the house was no effort to him. He could do housework as well as paint the house and perform repairs on it. With a cigarette dangling on his lips, I can hear him hum a song as he sawed away at some wood.



*My uncle Bruce Mazibuko, during school days*

I do not recall what he was like when preaching, but have seen his preacher's clothing in the house. However, he taught us the Old Testament as if it were about people he knew. At prayer, he had a steady refrain of: "King of nations and peoples!" He never said say grace in Xhosa but in Sesotho.

## **My Mother**



*My mother, Norah Sidinana*

My mother, Norah Weziwe Sidinana, was a MaGumede, a Zulu, but her mother was a Maradebe, or the Mfengu clan. My mother was the last-born child of her mother. After she was born, her mother passed on. She was brought up by a stepmother. My mother had two sisters and a brother. She also had six stepbrothers and a stepsister. They married in 1936 when my father was twenty-nine and my mother nineteen. They had six children and I am the third. The firstborn passed on as a baby.

My mother was a disciplinarian but was very affectionate towards her children. She never wished that her children lacked things that other children had. If she could not buy those things, she would make them. However, her rule was that we should be satisfied with what she offered us and never go begging elsewhere. Her teaching was that of instilling values into children.

When I was a young boy, my mother told me a lot about her early life and how she and my father had to honor parents in marrying and how all her girlish dreams were shattered. This made me feel sad. She told me she had lost a lot of weight after marriage and showed me her pictures as a young girl. I was to hear the same story from my father: about his dreams and wishes which he had had to abandon. Both had confessed attachment to someone else before marriage.

## **Relatives**

My father's sister married before him. She married a Methodist minister called Sam Nondlwana.

They had four children, three of whom still life. My uncle Bruce married more or less at the time my father married and had three girls. One year when his children were young, my uncle left his family without warning to go and work in the Gold Mines where he died some years ago.



*(Left) My youngest sister, Professor Eileen Noxolo Mazibuko  
(Right) My eldest sister Eucinia Thobeka Mazibuko*



*My younger brother, Dr. Donald Mthhobeli Mazibuko*