

Mantombazana Tshabalala-Msimang Pioneer in Medicine

Mantombazana Tshabalala-Msimang was born in Durban on 9 October 1940. In 1953, Mrs. Ethel J. Mali requested that her daughter, Edmie Manto Mali, be admitted into Standard Eight. As her father did not support her studies, Inanda arranged a bursary from the Natal Education Department. For Edmie, attending Inanda Seminary was a family tradition. Her great-grandmother, Martha Mali, was one of the school's first nineteen class members in 1869. Her mother, Ethel Mali (uMakhobotloane), and one of her sisters, Priscilla Ntombifuthi Mali (1962), also attended the school.

Edmie attended Inanda Seminary from 1954 to 1958. In 1956, she was the top student in her class. In 1957 she was a prefect, secretary of the school body, choir member, and taught Sunday school. In December 1957, Edmie obtained her second class School Leaving Certificate. She needed to take exams in two more subjects (one of them being mathematics) in order to earn her Matriculation Certificate, which she successfully did.

"It is very painful when I feel and know that I must leave Inanda...I have been educated here, and **really** educated here. I am what I am through your kindness of heart... please remember me in prayer. Especially pray that I always chose the right way in whatever I attempt doing... I shall pray for Inanda always. Amid all the strife I have this verse to guide and keep me, '...we are more than conquerors through Christ who gives us strength' even though there are difficulties around... I firmly believe God shall provide in all. I shall never forget Inanda." (Edmie Mali, 4 May 1958, letter to Miss Scott)

Edmie received a BA at Fort Hare University in April 1962. Her mother, Ethel Mali, wrote to the principal of Inanda Seminary, "May I please extend my gratitude to all those who have helped me so that Edmie will shine amongst others on this day. LONG LIVE INANDA".

In 1962 she fled the country with Thabo Mbeki and others as a political exile. In 1969 she qualified as a medical doctor at the USSR's Leningrad Medical Institution. Now married to Mendi Msimang, Edmie received a diploma in Obstetrics and Gynaecology from the University of Dar-Es-Salaam Medical School in 1972. She established the Health Department of the African National Congress (ANC) in exile.

On her return to South Africa, she concerned herself with gender and primary health care issues. She served as chair of the National Assembly's Health committee and in 1996 was appointed Deputy Justice Minister. Tshabalala-Msimang was appointed Minister of Health in 1999. She died on 16 December 2009 from complications related to her first liver transplant in 2007.

437 words