

OLWETHU WAKA -MY STORY

A MUST READ

This is a good story - a typical story - one of 100's, 1000's, of similar stories..... BUT not one that is part of our SA narrative.



Olwethu "I was born on 10 August 1991, in the village of Nontshinga, Centane District of the Eastern Cape, an area previously known as the Republic of the Transkei, South Africa.

I live to this day, in the same rural village, where we still have no access to running water, and very little in the way of community services.

Our family has lived in the village for many years. Life is very tough, with only a small income coming from farming some crops and livestock.

I started school at the age of five, at Siseko Junior Secondary School, moved to Tshongweni Junior Secondary School in 1998, and completed grade 9 in 2007.

After completing grade 9, I told my father that I did not want to attend the local High School, as I had observed that no matriculants from that school had, in recent years, proceeded to study at University. He and my mother agreed and as a result I moved to Pakamani Senior Secondary School, an unknown school, in Bika Township, Butterworth where I studied for three years, (2008 - 2010).

There I discovered my love of mathematics.

Thanks to mathematics teacher, Mr M. L. Bonakele, I gained confidence in my academic ability and, in late 2009, I started to score firsts for mathematics.

I matriculated in 2010 with the following results:

Mathematics - 89%
IsiXhosa (Home Language) - 65%
English (First Additional Language) - 46%
Life Orientation - 90%
Geography - 56%
Life Sciences - 64%
Physical Sciences - 68%

Soon after matriculating, I was introduced, by my friend and neighbour, Zolani Nkamisa, who

is also a high school teacher, to Mr Jock McConnachie (pictured above), who runs the Qolora Education Centre in the Centane area.

The Centre works on improving the quality of education in our area. Jock had previously assisted my neighbour, Zolani, in affording university many years before.

Jock arranged an Eskom bursary to finance my studies in 2011. Unfortunately, Eskom sent me to Walter Sisulu University to study mechanical engineering, and the year was a disaster for me. In the first place I was not interested in Engineering and secondly, the teaching facilities were very poor, with little computer access, very few books, and no mentorship.

I did not pass.

Disappointment

This was a huge disappointment to me and my family, who would have preferred to have me working with cattle rather than studying further. The fact that I had failed, also made it very difficult for me to regain access to another university.

Jock advised me to take a break from studies during 2012, so as to regain my confidence and to decide on exactly what course I wanted to study. I had no money and knew that I did not want to continue with Mechanical Engineering. Jock suggested that I spend the year working at the Qolora Education Centre, where I taught high school kids computer literacy and assisted them with mathematics.

During 2012, Jock also arranged for me to be assessed by a friend of his, to establish my academic potential. The result of the assessment was that I received a letter confirming that I had the necessary skills, particularly in mathematics, to succeed at university.

On the basis of that assessment, and my matric results, I applied, with the assistance of Jock, to Rhodes University.

Success

Thankfully, I was admitted to Rhodes University in 2013 to do a BSc Foundation course. I have not looked back since being admitted to Rhodes. The facilities and the environment at Rhodes have been to my liking and I thoroughly enjoy my studies. I completed the Foundation year, and thereafter three years of B.Sc, to obtain my B.Sc degree in Mathematics in 2016.

I am currently studying for my Honours degree in Mathematics.

Besides academics, I love music, reading and sport, particularly soccer. I am also very interested in the law, politics and current affairs.

During my university holidays, I continue to assist the Qolora Education Centre with its work in our Community, I also tutor students at Nontshinga Village.

My friends and I are not satisfied with the lack of facilities available to our community. We

are determined to do what we can to improve the situation. To this end, we formed an under 15 football team for our local youth. The youth have responded well and this will lead to a reduction in the abuse of drugs and the faction fighting, which is a big problem.

The financing of my education has always been a huge problem for me and my family. My father is 92 years of age, and survives on a government old age pension. He cannot offer me any financial assistance whatsoever. My studies at Rhodes have been financed by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. My results have been good enough for me to receive credits on my account and I was fortunate enough to be awarded a bursary by Sanlam Investment Management, in my final undergraduate year (2016).

Sadness

In 2013 and 2014, I was invited into the Golden Key Foundation, a privilege offered to the top 15 academic achievers at the university. Sadly I did not accept the invitation as I could not afford the R600 entry fee.

My father did not want me to pursue an Honours degree, as he says I need to go work. This is due to the financial hardship that he, and my family experience. I disagree with him, as I see education as the key to economic emancipation. I feel that with a higher qualification and appreciation of education, I will in due course be able to assist my family more meaningfully in the near future.

Thanks to the National Skills Fund, but with my Father's disapproval, I was able to enrol at Rhodes University this year, to do my Honours in Mathematics.

My future

I would like to study for my Masters next year, but this is, once again, going to be a financial challenge. For financial reasons, my parents will not be supportive as they would prefer me to earn income and to support them with their most basic needs. The solution would be for me to be able to finance both my studies, and my family, either by way of part time work, or a bursary.

My desire is to do my Masters in Financial Mathematics in the United Kingdom, where the exposure to the world economy will improve my understanding of the markets. I do not want my history and background to limit my future trajectory in life.

My village is extremely poor, with a statistically insignificant number of young people making it to university, thus perpetuating the cycle of desperate poverty – both economic and academic. Unemployment is a huge problem, leading to various social problems and a declining quality of life.

Assistance

If my application is successful, I will have the opportunity to realise my potential and to use my position to improve the lives of the poor people of my home village.

In the evolution of sciences, science has been crucial to the understanding of nature. I believe that the science of Financial Mathematics is crucial to the future economy of South

Africa. I intend to make this happen and would sincerely appreciate your assistance in this regard.

Contact: Qolora Education Centre jock@mconnachies.co.za
Duncan "Jock" McConnachie, McConnachies Inc, Managing Director

Attorney, Notary Public and Conveyancer

+27828590402