

ISANGQA

NEWSLETTER

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

Welcome to *Isangqa* – The Circle

Advocate Mthobeli Ntleki
ENG Foundtion Treasurer

We at the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation welcome you to the fourth issue of *Isangqa* – ‘The Circle’. In this newsletter, which is published twice a year, we discuss and debate concerns relating to the rights of women and girls, with gender-based violence against women and girls being the core concern of our Foundation.

This edition covers one of our big projects, ‘Healing Memories of the Past’. We completed this project at the beginning of 2023, thanks largely to the generous support of the National Heritage Council. See the article by Dr Lindsay Kelland for an overview of the project. Among those interviewed for ‘Healing Memories of the Past’ were teachers who, as married women, suffered acutely under the sexist and racist laws of the past. These veterans of the education profession shared their stories with, amongst others, Ms Abongile Madikida, who spoke to people in the Sarah Baartman District Municipality, and Ms Gcobisa Silwana, who covered the Buffalo City Municipality.

We pay tribute to one of our leaders, the undaunted feminist, Ms Pethu Serote, may her beautiful soul rest in peace. Among her many



accomplishments, Ms Serote was a founding director of the Cape Town-based Gender Education and Training Network. Ms Teresa Bailey shares memories of her years in exile, teaching at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, and we also learn from the experiences of Ms Nomtuse Mbere, another departed feminist, may her beautiful soul rest in peace, who worked with Ms Serote in South Africa. She describes Serote’s extensive gender equality and female empowerment work in government departments and civil society, particularly within women’s organisations.

The publication is richly encouraging. Enjoy! ♀

HEALING MEMORIES
OF THE PAST

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National Heritage Council
SOUTH AFRICA

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Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

‘Healing Memories of the Past’: “unearth[ing] a diverse and nuanced historiography of women’s survival under apartheid.”



Dr Lindsay Kelland
Secretary of the ENGF Board

‘Healing Memories of the Past’: “unearth[ing] a diverse and nuanced historiography of women’s survival under apartheid.”¹

At the outset of 2023, the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (hereafter ‘the ENGF’) embarked on an exploratory journey—inspired by the life of the Foundation’s namesake—to uncover and document the impact of discriminatory practices and policies on African women educators during apartheid. The project, ‘Healing Memories of the Past,’ sought to “recover narratives of African women educators who taught at farm schools across South Africa”² and was supported by the National Heritage Council (under

the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme). This exploratory study is one of the first of its kind and continues the work of “establishing a living heritage”³ of the impact of apartheid legislation, practices, and values on African women educators. The study’s findings highlight the need for further, in-depth, qualitative research aimed at “the broader archiving of the lived experiences of African women educators.”⁴

Ms. Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa was a teacher during apartheid. Teaching was one of a limited set of career options available to Black women (nursing was another option). But, as a married woman, Eugenia found herself unable to secure permanent employment as a teacher at a school of her choice. Circumstances beyond her control forced her to accept a temporary posting at a farm school some distance from where her family was based, and while their children could move to the farm with Eugenia, their father, her husband, was prohibited from

doing so. Circumstances born from the discriminatory practices of the apartheid regime led to the dissolution of her marriage and the breakdown of her family. Ms. Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa’s story speaks directly to the impact of what is known as the ‘marriage bar’—a policy or practice that denied married women educators permanent employment:

According to Act No.27 of 1923, a female officer was discharged upon marriage (SUSA, 1923 :282). Later this rule was modified, that is, upon marriage a woman teacher either had to resign voluntarily before the date of her marriage or her service was terminated at the close of duty on the working day preceding the day of her marriage. Thereupon, she retired completely or was retained as a temporary teacher as the needs of the different departments of education dictated.⁵

1 Ntombizikhona Valela ‘Healing Memories of the Past: Draft Report’ p.12

2 Ibid p.3

3 Ibid p.4

4 Ibid. There is of course a wealth of literature to be found on education—and ‘Bantu Education’—under apartheid; on education in the rural areas of South Africa at the time, and in particular on farm schools; on the conditions at and oversight of farm schools, and the levels of education offered in farm schools. There is also literature that deals specifically with the impact of education-related policies and practices on the lives of African women educators under apartheid, however this literature is scarce and is primarily found in theses of students in Education Faculties around the country.

5 Marimuthu Ponnusamy (2002) ‘The Working Conditions and Careers of KwaZulu-Natal Women Teachers’ p.121. Evidence of this ‘bar’ can also be found in Regulation 4 of Notice 206 of the Natal Provincial Gazette (1912) in which it is stated that “All women teachers must vacate their post upon marriage”. See, for instance, B. Blampied (1983). ‘An investigation of aspirations and attitudes of selected women teachers in white government secondary schools in Natal with reference to promotional hierarchies and opportunities.’ A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Organizational Theory, Administration and Management in Education) in the Department of Education University of Natal, Durban.



Interestingly, the marriage bar was common across racial classifications for women educators in apartheid South Africa. This began to shift for white women educators in 1959 and Indian women educators in 1960, although the requirements for the justification of their permanency were far more stringent for Indian women educators than they were for white women educators. Married women educators only retained permanency after marriage much later. Ponnusamy (2002) supplies the following dates: “Whites 01/01/1970; Indians 01/10/1977; Africans 01/01/1980; Coloureds 05/04/1984.”⁶

Importantly, however, African women educators were relegated to teaching at the primary school level and were standardly posted in rural areas and, in particular, at farm schools—typically long distances

from their families.

Farm schools, which are described as “schools for black children on white farms,”⁷ were governed by the Department of Education and Training—“a government department responsible for the education of Africans in those areas of South Africa that [were] not African ‘homelands’”⁸—and white farm owners who received a subsidy from the government and had complete oversight over the school, and especially the dismissal of teachers. Again, very few of these schools offered anything above primary level education. Indeed, teacher training for African women educators, for what it was at the time, primarily, and sometimes only, prepared African women teachers to teach at the primary level.⁹ Of course, after 1953, all of these schools provided ‘Bantu Education’ to African children—preparing

them for a subservient role in South African society. By 1986, farm schools constituted “73 percent of all Department of Education and Training (DET) schools (5,399 out of 7,362 schools).”¹⁰ In light of this statistic, it is especially alarming to learn that the teacher pupil ratio set by the Department for farm schools was 1 teacher for every 55 pupils—certainly not conducive conditions in which to teach. In the Government’s 1983 White Paper on Education, farm schools’ role in the education of South Africans was explicitly acknowledged. The report indicates that “the government is of the opinion that farm schools make a very important contribution to the provision of education at present and will have to continue to do so in the future.”¹¹ Given this, the paper also acknowledges that farm schools need to be developed “to an acceptable standard.”¹²

6 Ibid, p.116.

7 Pam Christie and Margaret Gaganakis (1989) ‘Farm Schools in South Africa: The Face of Rural Apartheid’ *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 33, No. 1, Special Issue on Africa, p. 77.

8 Ibid.

9 Especially noteworthy in this regard, the Department of Education and Training only made the matric qualification a requirement for Black and Coloured teachers in 1982.

10 Christie and Gaganakis (1989), p.77.

11 Department of Education and Training, *White Paper 1983: The Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa*, p.19.

12 Ibid, p.18.

While this study's findings are drawn from a small sample of participants—47 retired African women educators and their children in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa—they nonetheless reveal a number of the ways in which apartheid forced African women educators and their families into a precarious existence. Our participants disclosed the following in the narratives they shared with our data collectors:

1. All 47 participants in this study alluded to the 'marriage bar' denying them or their mother's permanent employment.
2. African women educators were forced to work as temporary teachers in farm schools.
3. African women educators were prohibited from having children out of wedlock—doing so would result in dismissal with immediate effect.
4. Those who were found to be pregnant were forced to resign.
5. African women educators often delayed starting families out of fear of losing their job or being separated from their husbands and children.
6. Some African women educators resorted to backstreet abortions in order to keep their jobs, which in some cases led to death.

These findings highlight the precarity of African women educators' lives—and their families' lives—under the apartheid dispensation. To be a teacher at this time, while securing some form of employment for African women, came with significant personal costs. These women could not pursue a satisfactory and stable career in teaching and have a fulfilling family life. If they were married with children, they were separated from their husbands and

their children from their fathers. If unmarried, they were prohibited from having children should they wish to remain employed. In effect, taken together, the measures put in place by both the government and white farm owners appear to have denied African women educators professional advancement in their chosen careers and personal fulfillment as wives and mothers. The agency of these women was significantly constrained by the oppressive regime that dictated their lives.

Akin to the migrant labour of African men to South African mines, African women educators' migration to farm schools during apartheid, particularly after the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953, significantly impacted their lives and the lives of their families.¹³ However, unlike migrant labour to the mines, there is a notable lack of scholarly work devoted to recovering these narratives—narratives that provide an entirely different perspective on migrant labour's impact on the African family unit. For many of our participants, this exploratory study—described by its senior researcher, Ntombizikhona Valela, as "a collaboration with affected communities in documenting the history and lived experiences that have been ignored"¹⁴—provided an opportunity for some of them to share their experiences of the injustices they suffered under apartheid for the first time. Our hope, as the ENGF, is that this work continues so that the narratives of these women can "be given a space to exist alongside the many stories that have been documented in post-Apartheid South Africa"¹⁵ and urge academics at higher education institutions to pursue this important work.

References:

Brenda Louise de Blancpie Blampied (1983) 'An investigation of aspirations and attitudes of selected women teachers in white government secondary schools in Natal with reference to promotional hierarchies and opportunities.' A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Organizational Theory, Administration and Management in Education) in the Department of Education University of Natal, Durban.

Ntombizikhona Valela 'Healing Memories of the Past: Draft Report.'

Pam Christie and Margaret Gaganakis (1989) 'Farm Schools in South Africa: The Face of Rural Apartheid' *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 33, No. 1, Special Issue on Africa, pp. 77-92.

Marimutu Ponnusamy (2002) 'The Working Conditions and Careers of KwaZulu-Natal Women Teachers'. Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Durban-Westville, South Africa. ♀

13 When the Bantu Education Act was passed, many Black women educators resigned from teaching in protest (despite the dearth of career options available).

14 Ntombizikhona Valela 'Healing Memories of the Past: Draft Report' p.7

15 Ibid p.10

Healing Memories of the Past

Frank feedback from two interviewers on the project



*Abongile Madikida (far left)
and Gcobisa Silwana (left)*

University graduates, Abongile Madikida (Social Science) and Gcobisa Silwana (Communications), took on the task of conducting interviews for the project 'Healing Memories of the Past'. They were among a total of eight data collectors on the project covering different locations in the Eastern Cape Province. The purpose was quite specific: "To gather information from retired teachers or others who know people who suffered from the discriminatory and inhumane practices directed at married black women in the teaching profession". Here, in the form of a debriefing, the two data collectors speak frankly with Nomkhitha Gysman, who managed the project, about their experience of accumulating this information.

Both Abongile and Gcobisa were contracted for one month, which, in their view, was not long enough, given the many obstacles they faced. Before undertaking the research, all the data collectors attended a 3-day orientation workshop in Makhanda.

On the first day they were given an overview of the aim of the project. According to Abongile, this was to find and interview people fitting the criteria agreed upon for the research: that is, women who, "due to unlawful and cruel apartheid practices and laws, were denied the opportunity to teach at the schools of their choice." The

data collectors were addressed by a senior researcher who presented the findings of desktop research that had already been conducted on the subject. The researchers were introduced to the ethical considerations entailed in conducting field research. For example, all information supplied by those being interviewed would be treated as confidential, the safety of those being interviewed would be ensured, and any person being interviewed was free to withdraw from the process at any stage.

The second and third orientation days dealt with mastering the

tools for data collection and familiarising the researchers with "ENGF resources, the up-front field allowance, and the hired vehicle logbook," said Abongile. They were coached on "using audio equipment, cell phone recording, and taking pictures and video clips."

This left 28 days during which the researchers' brief was to find candidates who fitted the project criteria, get them to agree to participate, conduct interviews, and transcribe them. The physical area covered by each of the researchers was enormous. Gcobisa was allocated Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality,

which covers approximately 2,536 square kilometres. Although BCMM is categorised as a metropolitan municipality, most of the area is in fact rural. Abongile was allocated one of the biggest district municipalities of the Eastern Cape, namely Sarah Baartman, which covers 58,243 square kilometers and contains seven local municipalities.

As project manager Nomkhitha Gysman says, they had initially assumed that it would be “easy to get respondents fitting the project’s selection criteria. For example, Sarah Baartman DM is characterised by many commercial farms, so we assumed that there would be easy pointers to potential respondents. In Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, because it has many villages, we assumed that there should be a handful of retired farm school teachers residing in those villages.” In reality, the interviewers found it difficult to locate and engage with enough people who fitted the project criteria. Each interviewer was expected to at least interview a minimum of ten people fitting the criteria.

Despite many challenges, both Abongile and Gcobisa managed to conduct enough face-to-face interviews or telephonic interviews to get a clear indication of the challenges that farm schools’ women teachers had been up against during the dark days of apartheid. Married women teachers were not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts. No matter where they lived, where their family home was, where their children went to school, women were given no choice as to which school they were seconded to, and they were not given permanent posts. Married women were treated as dispensable, as if they had no real need of employment, since it was assumed that only the males were essential breadwinners. This perception, according to the project manager, was perpetuated by society’s attitudinal belief of devaluing ‘women’s work’. In most

cases, women teachers were sent to fill temporary posts in remote locations far from their families. As Abongile explains: “Women were denied the right to teach at schools of their choice. That saw many women migrating to farm schools as either temporary or short term teachers.”

The consequences of this practice were severe. According to Gcobisa, the suffering affected entire families including the children. In fact, both the researchers recommended that future research includes looking into the long-term consequences of such practices for the children of these teachers. “More often than not, the practice broke family units,” reported Abongile. “Not all of the teachers divorced,” said Gcobisa, “but the practice led to the breaking up of family units.” She added that women teachers “missed out on bringing up their children, resulting in them being like strangers.” Many women teachers had to leave their children either with the father or the paternal or maternal grandparents. “Furthermore,” Gcobisa added, “the conditions on the farms where the teachers worked were usually unhealthy, with the teachers staying in mud huts with no ablution facilities.”

One of the perplexing things, according to both Abongile and Gcobisa, was that the senior researcher on the project could not trace any written law pertaining to the practice of separating married women teachers from their families. As Gcobisa explains: “Though the so-called law was vigorously implemented, there was no written law—even today you can’t find it anywhere except in school boards, but even so, the most powerful men of that time in education implemented the practice relentlessly. Women suffered. Some still tell their stories in tears.”

Abongile says that while conducting the interviews, the researchers came to the conclusion that there existed “an unwritten policy championed

by school boards—the bodies responsible for appointing, placing, promoting (where you were lucky) and firing all teachers. An unmarried woman was not allowed to bear children; if she did, she would be fired immediately, and a married woman teacher had to go around begging for temporary posts at remote farm schools. A very cruel practice.”

The researchers found that the trauma of sending women breadwinners to remote places remains largely unhealed. “The interviews unearthed lots of pain,” reports Abongile. “Switching over to the new dispensation in 1994, there was no debriefing, no counselling and support. These are women who walk along carrying apartheid pain and scars. At a glance, the pain is still written all over their faces. The interviews were characterised with lots of emotions.”

One of the very touching accounts concerns Advocate Rwentela, who was interviewed by Abongile, who reported as follows:

He and his eight siblings suffered hardships. Their mother, who was a second wife, was an educated woman who taught at a farm school. When it was discovered by the school authorities that she was married, she was fired instantly. She then went to stay with her husband and his senior wife where she was treated like a slave and had no decision-making powers. Of her nine children, only two managed to obtain an education.

Adv. Rwentela’s mother became a resource person for the village, reading and writing letters for everyone. His father married her to bring light in the family, not that she was loved. In actual fact, it was the senior wife’s notion: she was interested in the status that an educated

second wife would bring to the homestead.

Rwentela survived on bursaries and donations of school uniforms from friends and their parents. In her later years, Rwentela's mother became an interpreter for a local English-speaking doctor in addition to being a resource person for the close community.

Gcobisa had not been aware of the way women teachers were treated, so the interviews were an eye opener for her:

I had no idea what people went through. It came to me as a shock. Women have been resilient.

One of the cases that stood out for me was one of a woman who could not bury her child due to the isolation of the farm school and because nobody (those in power) knew that she had a child. There was no public transport. She still shed tear when talking about it.

Others became strangers and were disconnected from their

families—in some cases, a husband would be more like a roommate.

Asked what could have been done differently in the way the information was collected, both researchers said more time was needed. Gcobisa said two months would have been good, with the first month allocated to scouting and recruiting respondents. "I am aware people were rushing for the end of the financial year, therefore the project should have been started in December, to allow all project milestones to take place, meaning data collection would have taken place in February. The project was done hurriedly, therefore compromising quality."

Abongile said it might have been better to conduct a pilot study prior to starting with data collection as this would have led to their time being used more effectively. "As data collectors, we were doing many things at the same time. To cover an extensive area like Somerset East, Graaff-Rienet and the whole of the Karoo, we needed to plan our movements properly and prepare for a week's camping, rather than driving in and out. We were like fire fighters because of poor planning on our side."

Given that "many people are too lazy to read", Gcobisa suggested that documentary filming could have been done to complement the written notes. "This would raise awareness about one of the undocumented atrocities of apartheid, which, because it affected only black women, is not seen as important." She also felt that a bigger sample was needed. Furthermore, she observed that the interviews had opened deep emotional wounds and advised that because of this, there should have been time for both debriefing and counselling support.

Abongile put forward that respondents could have been recruited via media such as community radio and radio interviews. She also said she had needed support from the senior researcher but did not have access to her.

Both interviewers said the study opened many areas of trauma, including a death from a backstreet abortion. They said further research is needed which includes professionals in the field. Despite the shortcomings mentioned, both women said they learnt a lot and were grateful for the opportunity to do the work. ♀





Above, the team of interviewers at the briefing meeting in Makhanda in February 2023.
 From left to right: Terri Fortein (Communications); Nosiviwe Mnyaka (Amathole District Municipality); Gugulethu Mbana (Alfred Nzo District Municipality); Abongile Madikida (Sarah Baartman District Municipality); Simthembile Zembe (O.R. Tambo District Municipality); Gcobisa Silwana (Buffalo City Municipality); Sipho Gadayi (Joe Gqabi).
 Absent from the photo: Zukisa Mganga (Chris Hani); Bongwiwe Mpukwana (Nelson Mandela Metro).

Below, in the briefing for interviewers, Makhanda, February 2023



Pethu Serote (1948 – 2023) – A Tribute

Contributions to this article are from Charmaine Fortuin, Nomtuse Mbere and Teresa Bailey



Pethu Serote, celebrated educator and staunch supporter of women's rights, had multiple roots in southern Africa. Born in Pimville, Soweto, on 18 July 1948, her primary schooling took place in Lesotho, after which she attended Orlando High in Soweto and went on to study education at the University of the North (Turfloop). Along with her husband, Wally Serote, she went into exile in Botswana in 1977 and worked as a teacher at Marupula School. However, life in the frontline states soon became too dangerous for activists, so Pethu, having separated from her husband, moved to Tanzania in 1983. She was deployed to the ANC Education Department and became Adult Education Coordinator at Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. SOMAFSCO provided education at all levels for thousands of South African exiles, including children born in exile, young students, adults, and older comrades, known

as "ngwenyas" (crocodiles), who had left South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

Strength, good humour and humanity helped Pethu to endure the many hardships of exile, such as anxiety about family in South Africa, living in very basic conditions, and the suspicions and rivalries of the exile community. Her steadfastness inspired courage in many people.

Pethu was a firm believer in equality and the rights of the least powerful in society, especially women and girls. She became a strong, single woman, who confronted unfairness however and wherever it occurred, without ever becoming bitter. She engaged with people with warmth, kindness and integrity, and she contained her own anxiety, grief and trauma through open communication with close friends, and by finding a political perspective to help her.

In 1986, Pethu went to the United Kingdom to study for a master's degree. She made friends quickly and adapted to a very different way of life without losing any of her national or cultural integrity. Her steely confidence, developed over years of fighting all sorts of oppression, enabled her to withstand the petty racism and sexism she sometimes faced. Having completed her master's degree, Pethu resumed teaching at SOMAFSCO in Tanzania. Then, in 1991, she returned to South Africa to join the Centre for Continuing and Adult Education at the University of the Western Cape.

As political democracy was being negotiated, Pethu threw herself into the preparations for the 1994 elections. She was involved in intensive discussions amongst a group of 11 activists, all of whom, she wrote, were "skilled people with full time jobs, [who] wanted to share their skills with the community and explored ways of



making this possible.” After a year of planning how to create a training network to impart skills that would address gender dynamics in workplaces, they formed GETNET, with Pethu as its first director.

Even before there were any commitments from donors to support GETNET’s work, Pethu had made the bold decision to start the organisation “with or without money”. Very soon, GETNET was strong enough to commit to being sustainable by generating income from its consultancy work, which over time, brought in more financial support than that received from funders.

In 1995, GETNET opened an office in Cape Town that envisioned a network of gender activism and made gender education and training its core service. GETNET believed that in order to transform gender relations and empower women, it needed conscious gender-sensitive people with the skills to design and implement gender-sensitive delivery instruments.

The small core team of in-house staff began to design and write training manuals, conduct workshops, and train trainers in different provinces. The intention was that after two years of instruction, these coaches would become associates who could run

workshops and courses in different parts of the country.

The target for GETNET was to find “change agents”—people who were well-placed to initiate and maintain gender equity. Under Pethu’s leadership grew a panel of trainers. Supported by GETNET’s development and administration team, these instructors implemented an intensive gender awareness strategy incorporating the ongoing training of gender coordinators. The programmes covered gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, a local government course, and men and masculinities. Frameworks were developed to analyse the social construction of gender, the ideology of male superiority, and the intersections of race, class and gender-based violence.

Within a few years, GETNET had consolidated its reputation in South Africa and was expanding into the SADC region, building a strong and flexible network of women and men committed to working towards gender equality. The organisation won national government tenders for gender mainstreaming and related work and gained respect in the gender sector by hosting and participating in international training programmes and conferences. Among Pethu’s

major achievements, while spearheading the network, were the development of the ‘Social Construction of Gender Framework’ and the ‘Triangle for the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, GBV and Poverty with Gender’.

Below are some specific examples that illustrate the range of GETNET’s work:

- Participation in the Oxfam Gender Training Manual in Zimbabwe. Under Pethu’s leadership, the draft manual was critically evaluated and additional relevant gender issues were incorporated.
- A commission from the South African Department of Land Affairs to develop a gender training manual for land restitution.
- The provision of gender training to the South African Department of Social Development’s senior management including the deputy minister, director general, and other senior officials. This process led to a gender policy for the department, which went through several consultations and reviews at the head office and in the provinces, until it was finally accepted.

- Observer participation at a UNICEF-funded men's workshop. After this, Pethu introduced and facilitated many seminars for men, creating specific training for them.

Unfortunately, from 2006 onwards, GETNET suffered from the lack of donor funding availability, sharing the same fate as many other NGOs. This was devastating for Pethu, especially considering how thorough and effective GETNET's methods had been, and despite all her efforts to ensure the organisation's sustainability.

For her work and foresight, Pethu received many accolades, including being listed in the 'Directory of Gender and Development Experts' produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2001).

Within South Africa, Pethu's contribution to policy making and national forums was sought after.

- She was a member of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Standards Generating Body for the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and was an accredited trainer of gender education programmes through the Services Sector Education and Training Authority (SSETA).
- She was a member of the South African Evaluation Network and served on the boards of several NGOs between 1991 and 2007.
- Pethu was appointed SA Country Consultant to carry out a capacity needs assessment of the National Gender Machinery to propose how to strengthen its capacity and effectiveness (2003-4).
- She was contracted as a content advisor for the gender mainstreaming manual for the South African Government by the Presidential Office of the Status of Women (2004/5).
- She served as a Commissioner on the Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development (2003-4).

Pethu Serote's memory stays strong with all those who knew and loved her. She was a woman of immense courage, with an unwavering commitment to gender equality. She was a soldier, feminist, mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, friend, comrade, activist, academic, facilitator, lecturer, teacher and mentor. ♀

Thanks to Lenstoe Serote for additional biographical information.



The Board of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation



Above, from left to right, Ms Nomkhita Gysman (Chariperson), Ms Simphiwe Nombewu, Ms Vuyokazi Mahlasela-Matsam, Advocate Mthobeli Ntleki (Treasurer), Dr Lindsay Kelland (Secretary) and Ms Nomso Kana (Vice Chairperson).

Below, in a Board meeting in April 2023 - from left to right, Dr Lindsay Kelland, Ms Nomso Kana, Ms Nomkhita Gysman, Advocate Mthobeli Ntleki, Ms Simphiwe Nombewu, Ms Vuyokazi Mahlasela-Matsam.



For detailed profiles of the Board members, visit our website : [click here](#)