



Nokutela Dube-

Born in 1873 in Inanda, KwaZulu Natal as Nokutela Mdimba, this dynamic heroine was educated at Inanda Seminary and became its earliest graduate to build institutions for modern Africa, in her capacity as a singer, a seamstress, an educator and an early voice for Africa in the 19th century United States of America and Europe. The first wife of Reverend John Langalibalele Dube, the first President General of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC- later renamed the African National Congress), Nokutela and her husband worked tirelessly to raise funds in the United States between 1896 and 1899 to build the Ohlange Institute (1900), the newspaper *Ilanga Lase Natal* (1903) and many other ground breaking institutions that furthered the cause of a multiracial democracy for South Africa. The Ohlange Institute was a school that focused on educating Black communities. Revered by Black communities, the Ohlange Institute was seen as suspect by the White government who on several occasions pushed for its closure as it was feared the school encouraged insubordination. Nokutela was instrumental in organising music and domestic science classes. During this time, Nokutela along with her husband John authored a book titled *Amagama Abantu (A Zulu Song Book)* in 1911, a book that stands as a landmark in the development of Zulu Choral music. Nokutela's musical works helped assist the Ohlange Institute survive financially. She also formed a choir for the purpose of performing and was an inspiration to young women.

Marriage- Nokutela married John Dube in 1894 at the Inanda Church. While teaching and preaching in the Zulu Missionary, John was offered the chance to establish a mission station at Incwadi, a farm his cousin had purchased for the Qadi people which lay on the Unkomanzi River to the west of Pietermaritzburg. Nokutela's link with one of the most revered female missionaries, Mary Edwards helped John establish the 9 000acre farm which became the Inanda Seminary. The Seminary provided primary schooling to women to learn to care for families and homes as well as how to sew.

A full member of missionary activities at Incwadi, Inanda, and Nokutela was instrumental in the shaping and influencing of historical developments of self-empowerment and the spirit of independence in the area.

Time in America- Up until her death in 1917, Nokutela and her husband travelled several times to the United States to gather financial support for their work to uplift the African people through industrial education. Nokutela and John enrolled at the Union Missionary Training Institute in Brooklyn where John studied Theology and Nokutela Music and Home Economics. The couple built and maintained some of the earliest relationships between South Africa and the United States. During a trip in 1904, Nokutela and John raised enough funding to erect the Ohlange Institute's first two-storey building. In 1910, Nokutela played a prominent role in the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Americans Zulu Mission where she met and interacted with the Missions most revered female missionary, Mary Edwards. During their United States and European tours, John would speak about their ambitious plans for the upliftment of their people in South Africa, followed by Nokutela who would dazzle audiences with her superb voice, her click songs and her piano playing. Part of their efforts led to the popularisation of *Nkosi Sikelel'*

iAfrika (composed by Enoch Sontonga) which later became the National Anthem of the republic of South Africa after being performed for years by the Ohlange Choir as “A Prayer for the Children at Ohlange.” Life with John- Nokutela was instrumental to the success of her husband, John Dube who was elected the first president of the ANC in its founding year of 1912. The Dube’s not only kept alive the dream of educating Africa, they also continued to be active and prominent participants in African association life, not only in Durban but in Johannesburg too. Nokutela’s name has been associated with The African Club, an institution formed in Johannesburg to cater to the social and cultural needs of the African class. Nokutela is known to have greatly inspired many young Black women to pursue their educational dreams in the United States.

Death – Nokutela passed away on 25 January 1917 in the house she owned with her husband in Sophiatown. Days before her death she suddenly took ill with a kidney infection and John arranged for her to be brought to Johannesburg for treatment but it was too late to save her. Her large funeral service was attended by most of the Congress Executive, including Saul Msane and Alfred Mangena with their wives as well as Pixley ka Isaka Seme and several members of the Natal Congress. Nokutela was buried in Brixton Cemetery in an unmarked grave until 2009 when Johannesburg City Parks located the grave. In 2013, JCPZ unveiled a tombstone in honour of Nokutela. Her grave number is CK9763.