



Nontando Duma, left, with a colleague

elderly people, allaying their anxieties, promoting self-sufficiency, and keeping them company until their end of life”.

Nontando remembers the apartheid era as being both good and bad for a nurse. “We had no time for white racists. We grew up during the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) when we knew that ‘black is beautiful’, and didn’t have time to pretend to be something we were not. We gave all our care and love to our own people unconditionally and excelled in what we were doing as nurses,” she said.

Nontando said one of the drawbacks of the time was that the best jobs were reserved for white people. “Whites could have senior positions, irrespective of their qualifications or competence.”

Nontando has been married to Richard Duma since 1968 and they have four children – two sons and two daughters. She moved to Lamontville when she got married and the family now lives in Hillcrest, west of Durban.

## From humble beginnings to an academic in the nursing profession – the story of Dr Phumelele Jabulisiwe Kunene

For some black people growing up during apartheid, having a Junior Certificate (JC) was one of the major achievements. Times were tough; the powers that be were not comfortable with blacks obtaining better education. They were seen as a threat to the order. Because education was a light with which black people could illuminate their future, it was in the interests of the apartheid government to limit their educational progress as much as possible.

For a black girl born in 1939 in a remote rural area called EsakwaBiyela, near Melmoth in what used to be called Zululand, life was surely going to be tough. The colour bar system, and then apartheid from 1948, ensured that black people started life on the back foot. Like most of her peers, Phumelele Jabulisiwe Kunene did obtain her JC. However, for the go-getter that she was, this was not enough. She only left school because of a lack of funds. Phumelele enrolled for nursing at KwaCeza, a mission hospital, while she continued to work towards her matric through private studies.

Nursing was one of the few professions that black women could turn to in those days. But for Phumelele, it was more than that: she ‘loved’ it.

“I grew up in a home very close to a mission hospital. Nurses were my good role models. I longed to be part of the caring profession of nursing. Nurses were smartly dressed in their uniform, and disciplined. Good Christian values impressed me as I was born and brought up in a Christian family where caring was emphasised,” she said.

For a young black woman, nursing was a God-sent profession. “It also helped for us people with financial constraints in that as a student, one got a stipend instead of paying for the tuition fees,” she remembered.

Back then marriage for nurses was seen as a next step; nursing and being married was a nice package indeed! Phumelele moved to Durban when she got married, and it was here that she got employment.