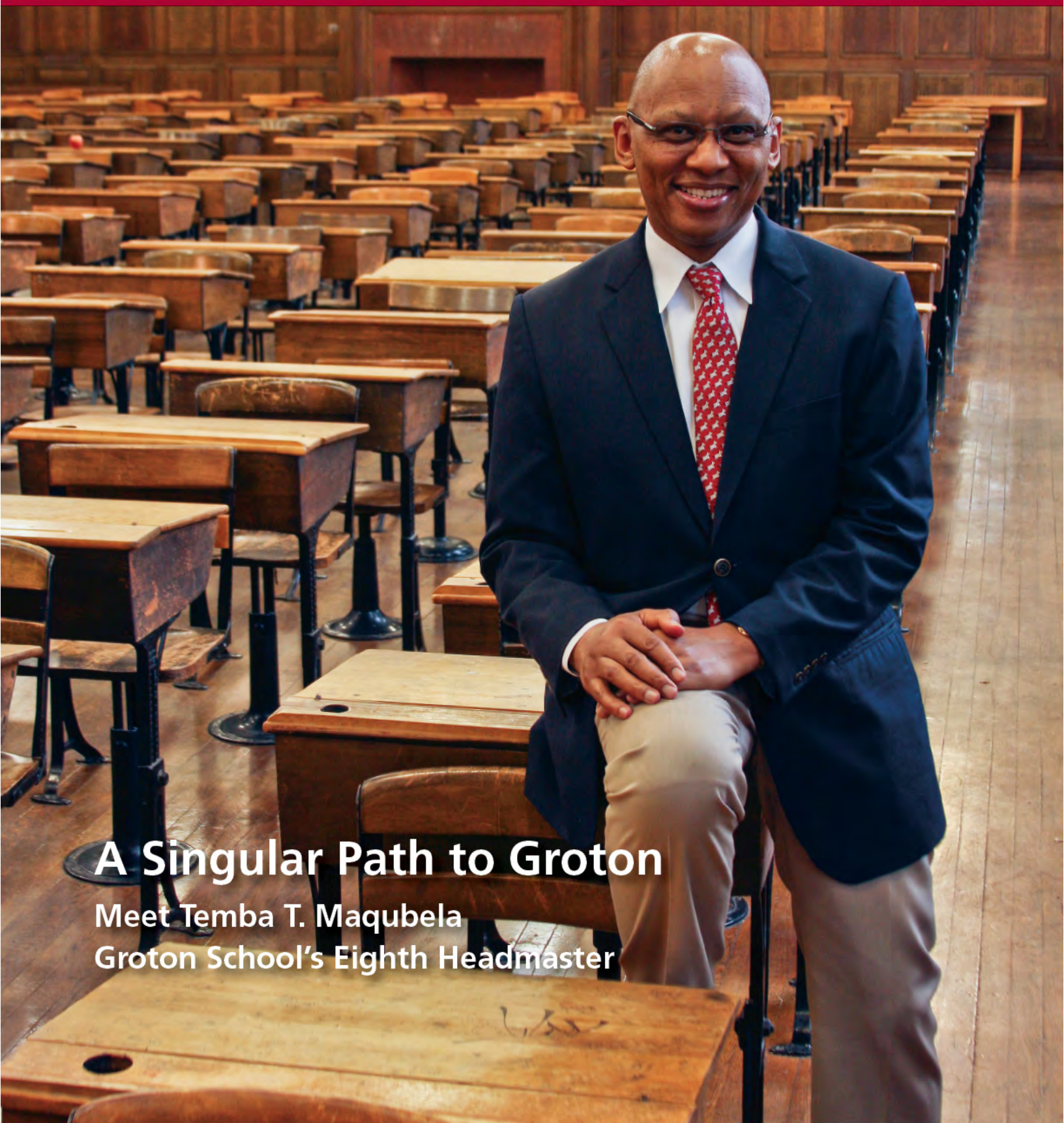
Groton School

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A Singular Path to Groton

Meet Temba T. Maqubela
Groton School's Eighth Headmaster

A Singular Path *to Groton*

BY GAIL FRIEDMAN

How deep-seated values guided our eighth headmaster from apartheid-era South Africa to the Circle

It was 1976, and 17-year-old Temba Maqubela was sitting in biology class at St. John's College, a boarding school in the South African town of Mthatha. In a few months, he was to graduate and head to medical school on a full scholarship.

Then, in a flash, everything changed.

Police stormed the room, grabbing him and three classmates and detaining them for anti-apartheid activities. His teacher, who happened to be his mother, was aghast.

That moment re-directed the life of a student who, decades later, would become Groton's eighth headmaster. It also encapsulated values that he holds dear: the determination to fight against injustice and for equality, and the overriding belief in education and its power to transform.

Through privilege and poverty, arrest and exile, Temba always carried with him the legacy of education instilled by ancestors who changed the political and intellectual face of South Africa. Among black South Africa's educated, dedication to scholarship and political awareness often went hand in hand.

continued



Annie Card

"From age 8 or 9, we had to read and write for people. We had to hold people's thoughts and ideas in great confidence."

An Early Mission to Serve

AS A BOY, Temba walked about a mile to a grammar school in his village of Nonkobe, an enclave of about 500 people. In this one-room school, each age group took a corner, overhearing the lessons of students older and younger. They called the building the Schoolhouse—"a different kind of Schoolhouse—made entirely of rocks that the villagers collected," Temba laughs, comparing it to the Schoolhouse that presides over Groton's Circle.

Living in a highly educated family in a village where few had formal schooling beyond high school, or even middle school, he recognized the seriousness and privilege of education. "In the village where we lived, my family members were the only educated people, and they were the only ones with a car," he says. "Therefore our home was the post office." Most of the letters came from the mines, where the young men in the village typically worked. Accepting a job was referred to as "joining" the mine. To eight-year-old Temba, learning to read meant he could uphold his family's responsibility and share mine workers' letters with their families.

"We knew we had to be available to read the letters from their loved ones in the mines or to write letters, whether of death or birth or divorce, whatever it was," he says. "We went to school with the obligation of service instilled in our minds."

Temba knew which families had members who could read the letters, and which did not. "My father used to come and deliver mail, and our job, as young children, because our parents were working in town, was to give people their mail," he says.

As he speaks, a scene emerges that he hadn't recalled for years: "They would be sitting around in a circle. Some of them would be in their red ochre clothing, kneeling, waiting for their names to be read. Sometimes there would be little slips that indicated there was money being sent, or telegrams indicating that someone had died or something like that. So I would read the names, and those who could read would leave, and those who couldn't read would stay."

Children in many of the families attended school, but families did not want them exposed to the harsh realities in those letters, Temba says. "From age 8 or 9, we had to read and write for people. We had to hold people's thoughts and ideas in great confidence." Perhaps that is when his career in education truly began.

Straddling Two Worlds

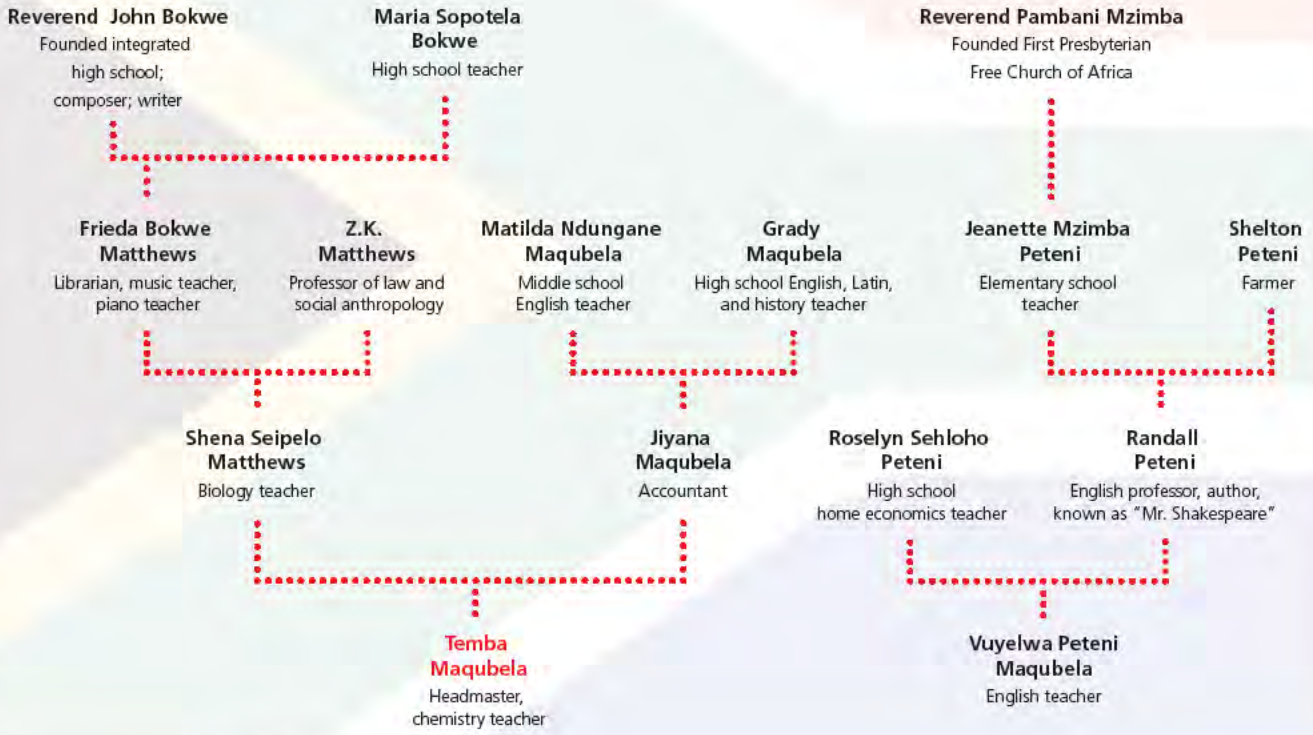
BESIDES BEING THE village post office, the Maqubelas' home also was the spiritual center—an Anglican church —until Temba's grandmother died and his father built a church in her memory. "I would say that our home was the home of light in the village," he says.

Nevertheless, Temba knew he would not live out his life in the village. "The thing is, we lived in two worlds," he explains. "We lived in this incredible world of people who did not speak a single word of English, where there was no running water, no electricity. We studied using a candle. Then on vacations, we went to visit my grandfather, who worked at the university, where there was electricity, there was running water."

That university professor, to this day, is revered as one of South Africa's preeminent intellectuals. Temba's maternal grandfather, Zachariah Keodirelang Matthews—known as Z.K.—became the first black to earn a degree from a South African university, and then blazed the same trail in law school. After briefly practicing law, he studied at Yale and the London School of Economics, and taught at the University of Fort Hare (a job from which he resigned in 1959 after the government restricted the school to members of the Xhosa people). Botswana's president appointed Matthews, his former professor, ambassador to the U.S., a position he held from 1966 until his death in 1968.

Temba becomes pensive while reflecting on the influence of all his grandparents—Grady and Matilda Maqubela, a constant,

A Family of Educators



nurturing presence in the village; Granny Matthews, a beloved librarian, music teacher, and performer; and the larger-than-life Z.K. Matthews. Of all the accomplishments, Temba seems most in awe of Z.K. Matthews' humility—even when entertaining a world leader, Matthews would take him to a church service or a teachers' union meeting "in the most humble of places."

His grandfather Matthews' refrain was deeply ingrained: "No matter how educated you are, no matter who you are around, always maintain your humility." The words still ring as loudly as ever today. "I look at the Groton opportunity with that in mind, that whatever happens, the job should not change me—in terms of seeing people as people first," Temba says. "Then I can see other things later."

Granny Matthews' father, the Reverend John Knox Bokwe, was a composer and writer, and he also founded a school to serve both blacks and poor whites. A friend and contemporary of Bokwe's was Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba, founder of the First Presbyterian Free Church of Africa and great-grandfather to Vuyelwa Peteni, the woman Temba would marry. The families were intertwined generations ago, long before Temba and Vuyelwa met, and Matthews taught Vuyelwa's father, Randall Peteni.

Matthews modeled humility and intellectualism, but he also led a life of political activism in the name of justice—a mantle that Temba and many in his family carried. A provincial



Ellen Harasimowicz

president of the African National Congress (ANC), Matthews was among 156 people—including most of the ANC members and his student, Nelson Mandela—who were tried in South Africa's treason trials, beginning in 1956. He was arrested during the 1960 state of emergency and detained for several months, Temba says.

The day that police stormed Temba's biology class was far from the first time they had detained members of his prominent family. And Temba's arrest was not entirely unexpected. The night before, a friend had driven 10 hours from Johannesburg to warn the four boys that police planned to detain them; they knew they were being watched for supporting an effort to overthrow the government and its racist policies. At the time, Temba was on full scholarship to St. John's and took his studies seriously. He would sneak out of the dorm to meet with fellow activists by night, and make it through classes the next day. "We were going to use a combination of brainpower, nonviolence, passive resistance, and cells throughout the country so we could paralyze the economy of the country," Temba explains.

> **"Fear was just wasted energy. You didn't want to dwell on being afraid because you would not be able to accomplish what was a very big task."**

Because all non-authorized political organizations were banned, his group worked entirely underground. With his grandfather and uncle arrested and exiled, and Nelson Mandela in prison, he knew he was risking his life. "People had already been killed and arrested and exiled for this type of work," Vuyelwa says. "So he knew what was at stake."

Despite the family's history of activism, Temba says his parents would not have supported his clandestine activities—had they known about them. "Oh no, my parents were just comfortable with the fact that I was going to go to medical school and would be a medical doctor," he says. While he holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and completed a master's and doctoral work at the University of Kentucky, Temba never fulfilled his plans for medical school and never received a high school diploma.

Though virtually every male in his family was detained at some point for political activity, they typically weren't involved at as young an age as Temba. Years later, however, his younger brother would go into hiding at age 15 and not resurface for four years. Temba sighs, the parent in him lamenting the suffering that he and his brother made their parents endure.

But he does not regret his actions: Temba, like many others, was willing to die for the cause. He was not so much fearless as unwilling to give up precious time to fear. "Fear was just wasted energy," he says. "You didn't want to dwell on being afraid because you would not be able to accomplish what was a very big task.

"There comes a time when life is not more important than the lives of people who are suffering."



A day after the Board of Trustees announced his appointment, Temba Maqubela received an enthusiastic welcome in the Hall. Students greeted him with boisterous applause, then listened with rapt attention.

The Escape

AFTER THE ARREST in biology class, Temba and his three classmates were released on the condition that they report to the police station daily, which they did for two days, until they received intelligence that they were about to be arrested and jailed. They took off for Soweto, a section of Johannesburg wracked with protest over government policies. They arrived during the famed Soweto Uprising; the chaos, says Temba, helped him hide from authorities. The four stayed about a week before crossing the border into Botswana. "The police were looking for us," Temba says. "We were wanted. And they were searching for us all over the country."

Vuyelwa, who started dating Temba two years before his arrest, learned about his exile from Temba's brother, who was in town for a family funeral. "I was as clueless as his parents," she says.

Once in Botswana, Temba and his three friends turned themselves in to police. "That was the only way we were going to get protection as political refugees," he says. Protection was relative, however, because the border didn't deter South African authorities. After about a year in Botswana, always on the move, he relocated to Nigeria, where he earned a scholarship to the University of Ibadan and completed his chemistry degree with honors. He would spend nearly seven years in Nigeria before moving back to Botswana. During this

time, he and Vuyelwa corresponded, courting by letter. She would receive cards and letters with various postmarks, but she was never quite sure where he was. "They never had any return address because it wasn't safe for him to divulge his whereabouts," she says. "Every once in a while, I would get something from him that showed me he was still alive out there somewhere."

The two finally reconnected, by chance, at a New Year's Eve party in Botswana in 1984. "It was right at midnight, right around then," said Vuyelwa. "He walked right in with his cousins, and the way I was seated I was pretty much the first person he saw when he walked in the door. We just looked at each other. We hadn't seen each other in eight years.

"We just looked at each other, and the rest is history," she says.

"The rest is history," Temba repeats.

It was January 1, 1984, ten years to the day since they had first met. A few months later, they were engaged, but Vuyelwa was still living in South Africa and Temba in Botswana. He was still a wanted man, and police watched Vuyelwa's every move. She visited her fiancé every couple weeks, each time dutifully reporting to authorities. Police questioned her regularly.

Memories overwhelm Vuyelwa as she tells the story. "Oh, my God, where do I begin?" she says. "At the border gates they would stop



Gia Kim '13

Temba and Vuyelwa Maqubela met with the Form of 2014 at Parlor last spring.

me and search me and question me, but eventually let me go. Sometimes they would detain me until the border gates closed. They would close at 10, so they would keep me in their rooms and release me at 10:01. So I'd sleep in the car and wake up in the morning and keep driving into Botswana," she continues. "They did that a few times.

"The police came to the school where I was teaching in Johannesburg, and my principal didn't give them access to me. They came to my home. My mother wouldn't give them access. . . . Ultimately they gave me a summons, and so I went to the police station. Of course I was afraid and scared. They could come up with any trumped-up charge. Even in their eyes I hadn't done anything wrong. So what were they going to charge me with?"

What the police wanted shocked Vuyelwa. "I went there, and they pretty much wined and dined me. They asked me to be a spy, to spy on Temba and his comrades and everything they were doing and give them information that could lead to their arrest. That's not how they put it. They put it nicely. 'Just observe. See what they're doing.'"

They served Vuyelwa tea. They offered her a house, a car, a stipend. "All I'd have to do is keep doing what I'm doing—visiting Botswana, going to the meetings. Every once in a while I should report in and tell them what was going on."

She told the white policemen, "Oh, what a novel idea. I'll have to think about that." Any remaining naiveté crumbled as Vuyelwa realized just how easily the police recruited spies, especially among people who did not come from a middle class family like hers. She went home, packed, resigned from her teaching job, and moved to her sister's, near the border with Botswana. "They were being nice—next time they were going to be harassing me," she says.

From her sister's, crossing the border was simpler, and she continued visiting Temba until they were married a few months later, in January 1985, at St. John's Cathedral in Gaborone, Botswana.

Temba was teaching at Maru-a-Pula School in Gaborone, where many of the guests stayed. The wedding, a noon-to-midnight affair, hosted by Granny Matthews, was more than the usual celebration of a couple's union. "It became a political expression by people of South Africa willing to fight against apartheid," Temba says. "We sent out 250 invitations. More than 1,000 people came. They came from thousands of miles to be at this wedding. They crossed borders to say that love would defeat apartheid."

Temba and Vuyelwa say they danced with joyous abandon at their wedding, despite the fact that spies likely were among the throng of guests. Retelling the story from their living room in Andover, they flash back for a moment and recall one suspected spy, a friend of the family, stopping to fix Vuyelwa's father's tie.

Coincidence *or* Meant to Be ?

Temba's high school was St. John's College. Temba and Vuyelwa married in St. John's Cathedral. The headmaster gave his first Groton Chapel Talk on September 10 in St. John's Chapel.

Temba knew about Groton before any other school in America because he taught at a school in Botswana where many Grotonians volunteered. Temba taught science at Maru-a-Pula School from January 1984 until March 1986. The school's founder, Dean Yates, sought support from Groton for Maru-a-Pula in 1971. It's unknown whether any Grotonians were at Maru-a-Pula while Temba was there, but Hadley Stack '14 was at Maru-a-Pula just this past summer.

Temba's grandmother knew of the attic hiding place for the baby, where they had arranged a soft sleeping spot, just in case.

Five months after the wedding, the South African defense force crossed into Botswana and staged a bloody attack, the infamous Raid on Gaborone. "I was supposed to have died in that raid, but because I had just gotten married and my housing had been changed, they went to the wrong house," Temba says. "The guy who was my witness, who went to sign to get us married, was killed—one of my best friends. And many others."

For weeks, a car was parked outside the Maqubelas' Botswana home, about a mile from Maru-a-Pula School, round the clock. They were under surveillance. For safety, the young couple slept in different places each night, sometimes having dinner at home then slipping out the back. By this time, their first-born, Kanyi, had arrived. "We would scale a wall and lay with our baby," Temba says. He mentions an old friend who recently wrote to congratulate him on his Groton position. "I slept with him in the staff room at school," Temba recalls. Most nights the Maqubelas stayed with friends, but never in the same place as the night before.

Temba's grandmother lived nearby and knew of the attic hiding place for the baby, where they had arranged a soft sleeping spot, just in case. If anything happened to Temba and Vuyelwa, she was to go there for Kanyi. Granny, as Temba calls her, visited their Botswana home regardless who was watching. "From her husband's time she had already done this and she was defiant," Vuyelwa says. Granny, whose husband, Z.K. Matthews, taught Nelson Mandela, is among the few who visited Mandela in prison.



Annie Card

Temba and Vuyelwa Maqubela

A Hard Landing in Manhattan

BY THIS TIME, the couple had applied for resettlement as political refugees in the United States, Canada, and Australia. They hadn't abandoned their cause, but they wanted to give Kanyi a life of opportunity, not persecution.

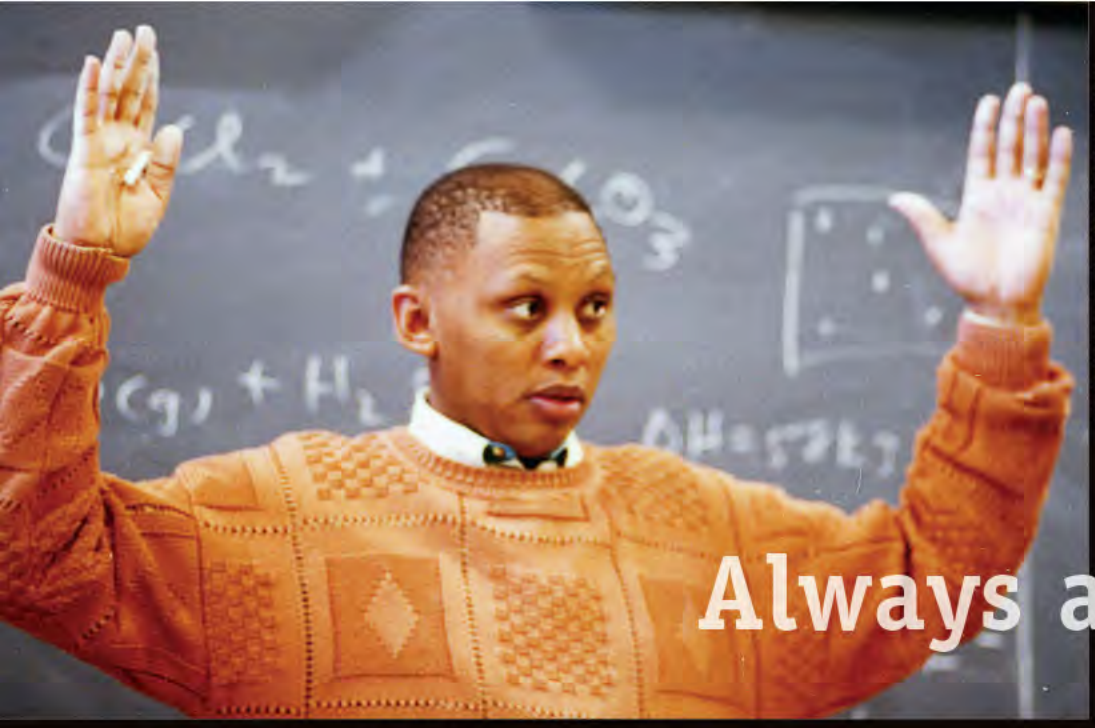
Eventually, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) sponsored the family and moved them to New York City, where for the first three weeks they lived in a homeless shelter, the Hotel Latham, on East 28th Street near Fifth Avenue. "We would queue up to get meals from soup kitchens. And we also were on food stamps," Temba says.

Life was hard, but they knew things would improve. "We were happy because we knew we were educated and we were going to get out of it," he says. "That's how education liberates. It gives you a perspective."

"We felt safe. We were safe from persecution," Vuyelwa adds.

They lived on $60 a week. Temba first got a job as a cashier and coat checker at the Museum of Natural History, at minimum wage. During the four months he worked there, both of them took a teaching exam and qualified for positions in a public school. Temba's first teaching job in America was at Long Island City High School in Queens, where

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Lionel Delevingne/Courtesy of Phillips Academy, Andover

Always a Teacher

During the early years at Phillips Academy, Andover

When Temba left Andover, many of his former students sent notes in his honor, which the school compiled into a book. Among the memories they shared:

"I first met the Maqs when I enrolled in Mr. Maq's Chem 55 class (without any prior chemistry background) during my Upper Year. By the second week in the trimester, I was so overwhelmed that I requested to drop to Chem 30. Mr. Maq told me to stay in his class. . . . **For the rest of the trimester, I spent nearly every other evening at the Maqs' home cranking through problem sets.** The Maqs never once lost patience with me. That year, I miraculously achieved a very good score in the AP Chem exam. I could not have done it without the Maqs' guidance and support."

— Lillian Kiang PA '96

"Mr. Maq was endlessly patient with me. I spent almost all of my conference periods with him trying to learn what was evading me, which was most of the material. … **He would not let me give up**. … Fast forward to my current career. … I'm a chemistry teacher at an NYC public school. I went from being on the very brink of failing chemistry to teaching it! I can honestly say that Mr. Maq is the reason I teach chemistry today. His spirit and patience inspired me to follow in his footsteps."

— Shani Goodson PA '02

"A few months into my 11th grade advanced chem course with Mr. Maqubela, I was almost failing … When I received my first term report, Mr. Maq suggested to my parents that I switch to another course. … This suggestion was all the motivation I needed … **there was no way I was going to miss the opportunity to be in his class.** … I can still feel the rush of satisfaction I felt when I finally earned a higher test grade than that earned by one of our class' top students. Mr. Maq … taught us about Chemistry, but he wasn't afraid to insert his memories, experiences, and connections into the lessons. He showed us how every exercise, homework assignment, and experiment could have a bearing on our understanding of the world."

— Laurel Ingraham Aquadro PA '02

"You took one of the hardest subjects I've ever encountered and you made it fun. **You tutored me when I wasn't your student, gave me advice when I wasn't your advisee, and remained a constant support in my Andover career** — in the classroom, at your dining room table doing chemistry problems, and on the sidelines of the track."

— Shannon Adams PA '12

"One of the greatest commonalities I found with Andover students and parents across the globe was their love for this indisputably lovable couple. … **I think the root of their magnetism is their ability to know themselves,** and in so doing, discern what is right for themselves, their children, their students, their peers, their school, and even their country."

— Kara Hollis PA '07

A story about the Maqubelas in Andover *magazine concluded with this observation by Andover Trustee Steve Sherrill:*

"What will be irreplaceable will be the incredible inspirational message that they have delivered. Every kid that they have touched has felt it. … It goes something like this: 'Here is somebody who likes me. Here is somebody who cares for me, so much that sometimes they will support me and sometimes they will demand more of me. Here is somebody that comes from a very different place than me yet seems like a parent to me.' **Groton students will learn soon enough how lucky they are.**"

Temba was an enthusiastic mentor, known for believing in his students even when they didn't believe in themselves.

he taught chemistry. Vuyelwa would later substitute in public schools, but first taught English as a second language part-time at the Fashion Institute of Technology. "They had late afternoon and evening hours so I would leave home at about 2 on the train and Temba would leave his work at the same time, and we would meet in Times Square and exchange the baby," Vuyelwa says.

Kanyi thrived. "He was chubby and precocious and just happy. A happy, happy baby," says Vuyelwa, who made sure Kanyi ate three full meals, no different than children of means in New York. "We had one meal, but our baby had three meals a day. Three square meals a day. Fruit. Veggies. Juice. He had everything." She remembers buying fish with food stamps at a high-end grocery store in Manhattan, eliciting stares from the cashiers.

After a year teaching in Long Island City, Temba heard about an opening at Phillips Academy, Andover. He started as a chemistry teacher and, 26 years later, would leave as assistant head for academics and dean of faculty—and still a dedicated teacher. He plans to teach organic chemistry at Groton.

Vuyelwa taught English at Andover (as she does at Groton), coached track, and headed a dormitory for 25 years; at many times through the years, she championed increased access to educational opportunity. She has directed the Independent School South Africa Education Program; launched, with her husband and other colleagues, a summer program, the African Studies Institute; and co-directed the Andover Breadloaf Writing Workshop. Before teaching at Andover, she was diversity director and English teacher at Pingree School, a fifth grade teacher at the Pike School, and an English teacher at Fidelitas High School in Soweto. She earned a bachelor's degree from University of Fort Hare in South Africa, a master's degree in education from Lesley University, and did post-graduate work at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The Maqubelas' three children, Kanyi, Pumi, and Tebs, grew up at Phillips Academy, Andover, from which they graduated.

Among Temba's proudest achievements, he says, are the students he taught who went on to their own teaching careers. In fact, five former students—all of them women—taught chemistry at Andover; three are still teaching, one is a chemical engineer, and the other is studying medicine. Temba was an enthusiastic mentor, known for believing in his students even when they didn't believe in themselves. He routinely met with a group on Sunday mornings to keep them on track, and often spurred a struggling student beyond an academic impasse. Many gained confidence and moved on to more advanced work in the sciences.

During his Andover tenure, Temba chaired the Chemistry Department and directed (MS)2, a summer program that strengthens math and science skills among economically disadvantaged African American, Latino, and Native American public high school students. He launched the ACE Scholars Program, which tackles the preparation gap among gifted students, and took the lead on Andover's Global Perspectives Group, which focuses on global education for students and faculty.

Groton School's Board of Trustees recognized how well Temba's experience, leadership, and values fit with the School's mission. After an exhaustive search that yielded numerous qualified candidates, Board President James H. Higgins summed up the search committee's decision last October: "Groton's leader must have intellectual depth and curiosity; be decisive yet dedicated to collaboration; engage the School community warmly, as family; possess a comforting core of spiritual grounding and discovery; and exhibit unceasing drive for excellence, open access, and an appreciation of the world around us," he said. "Temba Maqubela is such a person."

No One Is a Stranger

TEMBA FREQUENTLY USES the word "inclusion." "Boarding schools of course can be considered elitist," he says, "but at their most fundamental they're about community—about how to start a village where children are never

lost, where no one is a stranger. Everyone belongs. We'll be continuing and building upon Groton's excellence and the sense of belonging and inclusion here."

He is determined to tackle the preparation gap—the fact that not all students arrive at Groton with the same skills and education. "If we as an institution exclude by not leveling the playing field, consciously or unconsciously, we are wasting resources," he says. "We are failing our obligation for inclusion."

The Maqubelas' own story of inclusion winds through countries and decades, through poverty, persecution, courage, and opportunity. Their journey has been an odyssey, their life a mission, their tale an epic. Yet much of their story can be summarized through just a few words: their names.

In South Africa, naming children is a serious endeavor, and names carry powerful, sometimes fateful, messages. Indeed, the Maqubelas' names reveal much about their lives. Their eldest son, Kanyi (short for Sikanyiselwe), 28, was born when they believed their struggle was nearly over; his name, roughly translated from Xhosa, means "we see light at the end of the tunnel." Pumi (for Pumelele), 25, was their first child born in America; his name means "succeeded." Tebs (a nickname for Tebogo, his father's middle name) simply means "thanksgiving": Temba and Vuyelwa were grateful when he arrived 20 years ago.

Temba means hope, faith, trust.

Vuyelwa means joy.

So how does the name Maqubela—a four-syllable word punctuated with a Xhosa click of the throat—tell their story, and perhaps the story of Groton?

Maqubela means progress.



Ellen Harasimowicz

Vuyelwa and Temba with their children, (from left) Kanyi, a recent graduate of Stanford University; Tebs, a current student at Boston College; and Pumi, a recent graduate of Dartmouth College


cui servire est regnare