The History of South African Black Professional Land Surveyors

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Key words: Education; History; Land surveying

SUMMARY

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SUMMARY

This paper presents information about the history of Black professional land surveyors within the South African community. It is dedicated to all the men and women, girls and boys, who strive to do the best they can in order to leave a legacy of change, however small the impact, in their communities.

It dawned on me that we, Black South Africans, rarely capture the facts and history about our own. Our children do not know anything about what their grandparents did, how they got to where they were, and what legacy they left behind. We forget that we are the writers of history by simply being

on this earth and hence it is our responsibility to make sure that, that history is captured, known, and preserved.

What makes the penning down of this paper very personal and special is the fact that I am writing about people that I know and that I have made interactions with. Many of them are my mentors and confidants, others my colleagues and personal friends. These are the people I turn to when the going gets tough, they have an ear to listen, they never judge, and they are my heroes. These land surveyors are the people I admire and respect the most because they represent who I am and who I can be.

The contributions made by these land surveyors have been seen through our country's development with improved housing, water and sanitation reticulation, road networks, power transmission networks to name but a few. All development, no matter how small, originates with a land surveyor producing the contour maps, establishing property boundaries, staking out beacons for railway, road, building, electricity, water, sanitation, etc, infrastructure networks.

It is only after the land surveyor (Geomatician) has completed the base work that engineers, architects, quantity surveyors, etc, can start their work. This identified the land surveyor as being the critical epicenter of all development.

The words of Mr. Useni Eugene Perkins in his poem "Hey Black Child", resonated very well with all the people reflected on this paper. As girls and boys growing up, they identified with Mr. Eugene Perkins' affirmation of self and pride.

1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa's population is approximately 63.1 million (2025 estimate), with Black Africans making up the majority (~82%). The population is 51% female and has a youthful age structure, with about 26.2% under 15, though the 60+ age group is growing.

Population by group: Black African: ~82%, Coloured: ~8.5%, White: ~4.5 million, Indian/Asian: ~1.6 million.

Blacks in South Africa have always been in the majority but universities which offered degrees in engineering, medicine, land surveying, accounting, etc only accepted White students. The only university that was a traditionally university was the University of Fort Hare. This is where Leaders like Kaizer Matanzima, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and many greats studied. Fort Hare also produced leaders from outside the South African boarders, like Robert Mugabe, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Seretse Khama, and many others.

This is also the reason why the first Black South African Professional Land Surveyor is a Fort Hare alumnus. Fort Hare was the only university that offered a land surveying degree in the early 1970s. I also completed the first two years of my land surveying degree at Fort Hare in the early 1990s. At this time, the degree was being phased out and students would complete their degrees at UCT or Natal.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The AI generated literature review of Black success in engineering reveals a history of innovation and resilience despite enduring systemic obstacles. Throughout history and into the present day, Black engineers have been hampered by racism and a lack of access to quality education and resources. Still, their successes have had a profound impact, driven by ingenuity, perseverance, and a desire to uplift their communities.

Smith, Fleming, Moore, and Burris (2014) presented a paper on Black Undergraduate Success in Engineering: The "Prove Them Wrong" Syndrome or Social Responsibility. Their paper addressed the

total number of registered members of the South African Geomatics Council (SAGC) in all categories in 2025.

Table 1 The list of all Black Male Professional Land Surveyors between 1978 and 2000

ITEM NAME SURNAME UNIVERSITY REG. DATE

1 Minty S. Cossie Fort Hare 1980**

2 Vulindlela Cuba Fort Hate 1978*

3 Alpheus S. Nonyane Fort Hare 1982

4 Mncedisi Nzelenzele Fort Hare 1983**

5 Michael M. Lusu Fort Hare 1985

6 Victor Mdwara Natal 1985*

7 Madzidza G. Sadiki Fort Hare 1988

8 Michael M. Cokwana Natal 1989**

9 Sisa Tyekela Natal 1989**

10 Steven Khosa Natal 1989**

11 Molefe R. Maesela Natal 1990

12 Kwabeng J. Moloi Natal 1990**

13 Maesela I. Mashiloane Natal 1991

14 Lamla Stemela Natal 1991

15 Simbongile S. Flatela Natal 1991

16 Patrick Ngobeni Natal 1991

17 Tlabo C. Setati Natal 1992

18 Ntshavheni P. Matibe Natal 1992

19 Lunty L. Gqiba Natal 1995

20 Seshoale N. Mohlatlole Natal 1995

21 Victor V. Constable Natal 1995

22 Bandile Mtshatsha Cape Town 1995*

23 Hokwe T. Ndhlovu Natal 1998