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Title

Nokuthula Dhladhla Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

July 5, 2025

Extant

70 minute interview and 1 transcript

Abstract

In this interview, Doris Malkmus interviewed Paul Mokgethi-Heath and Nokuthula Dhladhla, co-founders of Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church (HUMCC) in 1999. Nokathula described her early religious abuse in a charismatic church in Soweto before finding the religious prayer group founded by Paul. Together, they found support from MCC to open HUMCC. Both decided to close HUMCC and moved on—Nokuthula to direct non-profit organizations seeking to broaden the welcome. She described how she continues this work, and how she and Paul decided to reopen HUMCC after which UFMCC elected her to the Elder Council, the first African to sit on that board in MCC.

Biographical

Rev. Elder Nokuthula Dhladhla serves as the Regional Coordinator for the Global Interfaith Network (GIN) on the Religious Dialogue Partner Project. A dynamic leader, passionate advocate, and deeply grounded spiritual guide, she brings decades of experience in faith-based activism and inclusive ministry.

Ordained in 1998 within the Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), Rev Elder Nokuthula became the Pastor of Hope and Unity MCC and has since dedicated her life to creating safe, affirming spaces for the LGBTIQ+ community within faith contexts. In 2023, she was honored with the Rainbow Star Award by the SA Queer Movement Organization and Midrand Rainbow Pride, recognizing her longstanding commitment to the LGBTIQ+ struggle for dignity, justice, and inclusion. She also works as a part time presenter on Mzansi Queer Radio station on Inclusive Spiritual Insights a Sunday morning show.

In a historic milestone, Rev Elder Nokuthula was recently appointed to the Council of Elders/Bishops of the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) becoming the first Elder from Africa to serve in this esteemed position of global spiritual leadership.

Her reach extends far beyond church walls. Rev Nokuthula is a Spiritual Coach, guiding individuals in integrating their spirituality with their sexuality and life purpose. She is also a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, a Board Member of the Micah Project, and a Founding Member of Ashes to Purpose, a transformative initiative rooted in healing, self-acceptance, and empowerment. Rev Nokuthula has played a pivotal role in shaping religious dialogue around LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Her work includes:

Participating in regional and international interfaith dialogues;

Convening conversations with religious leaders to foster inclusion;

Designing training curricula for LGBTIQ+ people of faith as dialogue partners;

Contributing significantly to initiatives by FRI a Norwegian LGBTIQ organization and FOCCISA (Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa) to develop materials that promote understanding and tolerance within churches in Southern Africa.

Rev Nokuthula is known for her bold authenticity, sharp wisdom, and magnetic presence. She is a gifted speaker, both powerful and humorous, and is often sought after for workshops, trainings, and keynotes. She has volunteered extensively across South Africa, working in partnership with numerous NGOs to facilitate LGBTIQ+ sensitization trainings and capacity-building sessions.

At her core, Rev Nokuthula is a visionary change-maker, a mother to many, and a builder of bridges between faith and justice. Through her ministry and activism, she continues to model what it means to live with purpose, love boldly, and stand unshaken in the face of adversity.

In the years since then, Nokuthula has participated in a very wide range of work in the field of religious dialogue especially – convening and participating in many meetings with religious leaders, working towards establishing greater understanding and acceptance for LGBTIQ+ people in the faith sector.

Nokuthula is an exceptional human being, she is grounded and compassionate, and from her life experience, able to articulate exactly why LGBTIQ+ people must be valued and recognized as full human beings, especially in faith-based contexts. She has a great deal of experience of dealing with difficult contexts and is able to stand her ground. She is a powerful, funny, deeply human speaker. Nokuthula is a person of great passion, someone who is committed to making a different world possible and someone with immense dedication to activism. She is well known within the LGBTIQ+ sector and beyond.

Nokuthula Dhladhla provided this profile

Biography Date: September 30, 2025

Scope and Content

In this interview, Doris Malkmus interviewed Paul Mokgethi-Heath and Nokuthula Dhladhla, co-founders of Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church (HUMCC) in 1999. Nokuthula described her early religious abuse in a charismatic church in Soweto before finding the religious prayer group founded by Paul. Together, they found support from MCC to open HUMCC. Both decided to close HUMCC and moved on—Nokuthula to direct non-profit organizations seeking to broaden the welcome She described how she continues this work, and how she and Paul decided to reopen HUMCC after which UFMCC elected her to the Elder Council, the first African to sit on that board in MCC.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Doris Malkmus as LGBTQ-RAN archivist as part of a series of oral histories at the MCC General Conference in 2025.

Access

Open to all researchers at <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/nokuthula-dhladhla>

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Languages

Collection material is in English

Cite as

“Rev. Elder Nokuthula Dhladhla | Oral History”, *LGBTQ Religious Archives Network*, accessed DATE, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/nokuthula-dhladhla>.

Digital finding aid created by Doris Malkmus, 2025

Tags

Metropolitan Community Church, Soweto, South Africa, clergy activist