



**HEALTH**

KwaZulu-Natal

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### **MEDIA STATEMENT - MEC DHLOMO WARNS STUDENTS AGAINST "SUGAR DADIES"**

Today; the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, visited Sibusisiwe Comprehensive Technical School in Umbumbulu to encourage the current matriculants (class of 2011) and educate pupils about the dangers of teenage pregnancy and other reproductive diseases.

The school was formed and named after Sibusisiwe Violet Makhanya a first black female to trained as a Social Worker at a time when the Natal State and 'tribal authorities' were controlling the movement of women. *"Those of us who went through this school have the honour to have had the opportunity to have learnt in a school that was started by 'Nkosazana' – as she was famously known. Sibusisiwe Violet Makhanya was the first Zulu woman to train as a social worker in the United States on a scholarship in the 1920s and had very liberating views on the position of a woman in society,"* said MEC Dhlomo addressing pupils.

The school is one of the Dinaledi Schools for science and mathematics and in the 2010 matric results one student obtained 100% marks for mathematics and six distinctions. Dinaledi Schools were identified by the Department of Education in 2001 for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in pursuit of improving the quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics and Science. Last year the school obtained an average pass rate of 91% to which the MEC challenged the class of 2011 to obtain no less than 100%.

The daughter of converts of the Congregationalist American Board, who nevertheless 'saw no incongruity in observing many of the old Zulu traditions', Sibusisiwe was born in 1894. Of prosperous peasant background, she was related to John Dube and was herself educated at the leading African schools of the American Board in Natal. Sibusisiwe's running of a night school from her home in Umbumbulu led to her being awarded a scholarship to the United States of America, from whence she returned in 1930 as Natal's first black female social worker.

*"The other reason I am here is to ensure that the class of 2011 does us proud once again. You know; the rate of HIV infection amongst your peers is very concerning. I am glad to see so many girls because in some other parts of this province young girls are forcefully married to a stranger. In other schools that we visited in the beginning of the year we found as many as 20 pupils pregnant. And in many instances you find that young girls have sexual relations with older men, 'o-sugar daddy'. I therefore want to encourage you to hold on to your dreams. Sexual relations may destroy your dreams and future!"* said the MEC.

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The MEC also shared that Sibusisiwe's concern was to ensure that the customary ethos are not lost in her community. The migrant labour system deprived villages of young men and put great pressures on the girls; he said. *“Small towns, mission stations and colonial employment opened up opportunities to women who wished to escape unwelcome marriage partners and the constraints of a patriarchal order.”*

In the same vein and driven by her (Sibusisiwe's) independence of spirit the MEC told pupils that; *“it is nonetheless somewhat not surprising to find Sibusisiwe Makhanya being an acting woman adviser to the Zulu Society. She asked three fundamental although rhetorical questions which are relevant even today which were: where is the original Zulu dancing on festive occasions that is in some quarters forbidden and what has been substituted for it? What has been devised to ensure that the home discipline of parents may be permanently engraved in the minds and hearts of youth? And what substitute has been provided for the time-honoured custom of ukhlonipha etiquette which requires that a woman shall not utter the name of her husband or her male relatives?”*

The emphasized the need for young people to respect themselves and to be ambassadors of Sibusisiwe wherever they are. He told pupils that there are people who are willing to help all best performers from the school to reach their dreams. He encouraged matriculants to apply to Universities in time so that when the time comes and assistance becomes available; those deserving pupils have already applied.

#### **ENDS**

Pictures available on request.

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