

ZWELETHEMBA HERITAGE ROUTE



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EMERGENCY CONTACT

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ZWELETHEMBA HERITAGE ROUTE

WELCOME TO ZWELETHEMBA!

Zwelethemba is an isiXhosa word, meaning **Nation of Hope**. It was first named 'eMtshokotshweni' (referring to the concrete slabs used in building houses) and as the settlement expanded, it was then called 'Khwezi' (Morning Star), before it finally became Zwelethemba in the 1950's.

The origin of the township was a direct result of South Africa's Slums Clearance Act of 1934, which allowed municipalities to demolish any area considered a slum. Worcester's previous 'township' was called Sakkiesdorp and was de-proclaimed under this Act in 1950, due to overcrowding. Similar to District 6 in Cape Town, residents (African people) were then moved 5km away from town. Like a stepchild, Zwelethemba was born!

NELSON MANDELA VISITS ZWELETHEMBA

1 **Mandela Square, Zwelethemba - Exact address unknown, since it was a clandestine visit.**

The exact house in which the beloved late President Nelson Mandela stayed in when he started the underground movement in Worcester in the 1950's is not known. Mandela was branded a communist terrorist by the Apartheid Government and spent 27 years in prison as a result. Despite this, he was instrumental in bringing about peaceful reconciliation in a country torn apart by racism, was loved and revered throughout the world for his magnanimity, and became the father of the people.

THOBILE "TALL" ZINDISILE MTWAZI - FORMER HOME

2 **10 Ngulube Street, Zwelethemba**
Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Born on 6 August 1968 in Zwelethemba, Thobile was well-built and struck an imposing figure. Known to friends and colleagues as 'Tall', he attended high-school at Vusisizwe in 1981. It was here that his interest in politics began and where he became involved in the liberation struggle. "Tall" was part of a group of 17 youngsters from Zwelethemba that were taken to Lesotho in May 1985, where they furthered their education and joined the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK).

He rose through the ranks to become one of its renowned icons. 'Tall' returned to South Africa in 1991 and oversaw President Mandela's Protection Unit from 1994 to 1999. He resigned after Madiba stepped down and died at the age of 38 in 2004.

DUMILE FENI - FORMER MGXAJI FAMILY HOME

3 **556 Africa Avenue, Zwelethemba**
Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Zwelidumile Geelbooi Mgxaji Mslaba 'Dumile' Feni (1942 – 1991) - the artist 'known only by his absence'. Sakkiesdorp was the birthplace of one of South Africa's first "township artists" and the first black South African artist who conveyed a political message through his art. Dumile is described in art circles as an enigma.

He was a master of turbulent imagery and never softened his distinctive expressionistic style to make it more palatable to a Western market. For a very long time his position as one of South Africa's most important artists were not well documented, despite his success in overseas exhibitions. To date the number of recovered paintings is about 400 and sales from his paintings are estimated at more than R60 million. Dumile died in exile in New York in 1991 and the house in which he went to greet his family before he went into exile, still stands.



FREEDOM SQUARE

4 **Cnr Siwangaza Ave & Makaola Ave, Zwelethemba**

Since the establishment of Zwelethemba in the 1950s, Freedom Square has provided a space for all social and political gatherings. During Apartheid, all African people had to register with the Labour Bureau and were forced to carry a passbook (Dompas) to monitor, restrict and control their movement. Failure to carry passbooks led to arrests. In March 1960 Worcester was very active in the campaign for the burning of the passes and the residents were angry about other political struggles in the country, like Sharpeville and Langa.

MEMORIAL WALL FOR FALLEN HEROES OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE

5 **Cnr Siwangaza Ave & Makaola Ave, Zwelethemba**

16 August 1985 is the anniversary of the shooting and killing of a young boy, Nkosana Nation Bahumi. His death marked the start of the killing of several Zwelethemba students who fought against Apartheid.

The SA Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) assisted the community with the construction of a memorial wall bearing the names of 30 liberation struggle icons and 9 tombstones to honor them for the significant role they played in fighting against unjust laws. Among them are: Nkosana Bahumi, Kenneth Mazula, Nkosinathi Kolo, Douglas Ndzima, William Dyasi, Thamsanqa Vanstaden, Kadimo Simanga, David Jacobs, Arthur Qaba, Mandla Bentele, Buzile Fadana, Sweetness Busakhwe, Alfred Mashoba, Andile Mashoba, Ntando Mrubata.

ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISTS GRAVES

6 **Zwelethemba Cemetery, Cnr Colidiza Ave & Yabo Street**

A dream for a better life propelled nine young people from Zwelethemba to stand up to the status quo and in doing so, they lost their lives. When a large group of people decided to get together to show how unhappy they were about Apartheid, a police convoy arrived and started firing shots at the group. Nine people died. These 9 names were unveiled during a special ceremony on 8 February 2019. The project was initiated by the Zwelethemba Arts & Culture Forum and included the upgrade of the nine graves.

The graves are for those who never received a proper funeral: Nkosana Nation Bahumi, Buzile Fadana, Kgotso William Dyasi, Thamsanqa Cecilroos van Staden, Mawethu Douglas Ndzima, Nkosinathi Mazula, Kadimo Simanga, Sello Jacobs.

JUDGE THEMBILE SKWEYIYA - FORMER HOME

7 **111 Hlalele Avenue, Zwelethemba**
Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Thembile Lewis Skweyiya was born 17 June 1939 in Worcester and retired as a member on the bench of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. He obtained a Bachelor of Social Science Degree at the University of Natal in 1963 and an LLB in 1967. In 1970 he was admitted as South Africa's first black advocate of the Supreme Court of South Africa.

His work included human rights and civil liberties cases especially involving political, labour and student organisations. Judge Skweyiya was appointed to the Constitutional Court on 1 February 2001 and retired from the bench on 6 May 2014 at the age of 73. Judge Skweyiya died on 1 September 2015 at the age of 76.

8

BEN KOPI BAARTMAN - FORMER HOMES

8 **602 Colidiza Road & 46B Kolo Street, Zwelethemba**

Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Ben Baartman was born on 1 March 1924 in the Eastern Cape and arrived in the Western Cape in 1947 after obtaining extensive experience in the mining, textile trade union industries. He helped arrange Nelson Mandela's secret visit to Worcester in 1959. Baartman initially lived in the settlement called 'Sakkiesdorp' where he became involved in politics and got into contact with several underground political leaders. He was served with a banishment order to Natal and later sought political asylum in Swaziland where he lived from 1961 until 1984. In exile, he served on many portfolios in the liberation movement.

He was senior ranking officer of MK and was a founder member of the MK Military Veterans Association. On his return in 1991 he served on the Zwelethemba Health and Welfare Forum and was ANC branch executive treasurer and founder member of Khumbula Amaqhawe Association. Ben Baartman died in Worcester at the age of 78 in 2002.

LUNDI TYAMARA - FORMER HOMES

9 **4 Khedama Street & 102 Dukulu Street, Zwelethemba**

Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Lundi was born on 16 December 1978 in Zwelethemba. He started as a backing vocalist for Rebecca Malope and was then offered his first solo record deal by Tshepo Nzimande. Lundi became one of South Africa's best selling gospel artists. He went on to release more than 20 albums, winning several awards, selling over 3 million copies. He died on 27 January 2017 (aged 38) in Johannesburg and was buried in Worcester.

DAVID TSOLWANE UHURU HLONGWANE - FORMER HOME

10 **717 Matroos Street, Zwelethemba**

Private residence not open to public. To be viewed from streetfront only.

Born on 1 January 1963 in Zwelethemba, David attended Vusisiwe High School. He did not complete Matric, but started reading books and magazines that inspired his drawing abilities. The art schools where he sought admission rejected his applications, but he continued to develop his artistic skills on his own while getting involved in youth organizations to help keep young people off the streets. In 1985 he was accepted at the Community Arts Project (CAP) in Woodstock. Despite losing his brother and other difficulties of travelling to the CAP facilities every day, he persisted.

David focused on ceramic sculptures, cartoons and graphic prints. In 1988 Hlongwane won a bursary to study in Italy, going on to complete a four-year course at the Academia di Belle Arte in Perugia. He has exhibited around the world, completed sculptural commissions, won the 1995 Mayibuye Centre Sculpture Competition and taught art to young people in prisons.

WORCESTER MUSEUM

11 **Intersection of Leipolt Avenue & R60 Robertson Road, Kleinplasia**
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Worcester has a rich history covering a time when the region was inhabited by indigenous hunter gatherers and pastoralists, followed by trekboer farmers and later the introduction of commerce and industrial change. It is a cultural history museum with a strong focus on agriculture. The collections emphasise the Cape colonial history with agricultural implements, wagons, furniture, glass, ceramics, textiles and metal, as well as the development of Worcester.

One of the museum's objectives is to promote social harmony and dialogue. Consultative workshops are being held in the community to support different interpretations of the town's development. A new exhibition on the history of Sakkiesdorp, Zwelethemba and Worcester has just opened.

