

## **Biographical Information About the Members of Thula Sizwe**



**Abel**

Jabulani Abel Dlamini (Abel) is the leader of Thula Sizwe. He was born on October 24, 1957, on a farm in Kwa-zulu Natal, in the Standerton district, one of the youngest of 22 children. His father had two wives, according to the old custom, and was the Induna (Headman) for more than 40 years. Abel and his siblings were told that they were descendants of the musicians of the Zulu and Swazi King's households, and they were taught many traditional songs and dances, as well as how to play traditional musical instruments. In 1977, Abel moved to Shoshanguve, and started working at Vanadco (a vanadium mine), where he was the first man of African origin to be trained as a process controller. He married his wife Doris in 1979, and has four children and nine grandchildren. In 1988, Abel hired a hall in Shoshanguve and presented a workshop on traditional music and dance for schoolchildren; it was there that he met a group of younger men who called themselves Thula Sizwe. He joined forces with them, teaching them traditional dance and song routines. Abel left Vanadco to go professional in music in 1991. Abel is heavily involved in music outside of Thula Sizwe: he performs in other choirs, does composition and choreography, plays piano and accordion, and is a talented storyteller and songwriter. He attends the Assembly of God in South Africa.



**Paul**

Paul Malesela Ramafalo (Paul) is one of the original founders of the group Thula Sizwe (Along with Jonathan and Nicholas). He was born on August 14, 1967, and is married (to Agnes) and has two children: a little boy Kgothatso, and a teenage girl, Rebecca. He was the oldest child in his parents' family and grew up in Shoshanguve, Pretoria. He and his family live with Paul's parents. He is a Sunday school teacher in the Zionist Christian Church he attends in South Africa, where he is deeply involved in the administration of the church. In addition, he is a soccer enthusiast.



**Nicholas**

Nicholas John Lenkwati (Nico) was one of the three original members of Thula Sizwe, along with Jonathan and Paul. He was born on June 16, 1970. He is married to Mabatho and has two children, a girl, Bridgette (age 12) and a baby boy Jonny. He, like many of the members of Thula Sizwe, was born and raised in Shoshanguve. He coaches a school soccer team and is involved in building a church. He attends a Lutheran church in South Africa.



### **Jonathan**

Jonathan Lesibana Mabuya was born on October 10, 1970. He is married to Sibongile and has two little boys, Kabelo and Nathan. Along with Paul and Nicholas, he founded Thula Sizwe in 1986, and, like them, he was born in Shoshanguve and grew up there. His hobbies include playing soccer, hairdressing, cutting, and styling, and he assists his church secretary as well as being a Sunday school teacher at the Union Faith Apostolic Church.



### **Alfred**

Alfred Letsoalo joined Thula Sizwe in 1988, about the same time that Abel became the group's leader. He is the main drummer for the group, and sings reaaaaally low bass. He was born on September 3, 1966. He is married (to Maggy) and has three young children, a boy, Mathepe, and two girls, Ofentse and Tsheamo. Alfred was born in Shosanguve, near Pretoria. He is a soccer enthusiast and is skilled in repairing electronics (mainly radios and TVs). He attends the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa. Alfred is Pedi, which is a tribal culture closely related to the Zulus.



### **Shadrack**

Sipho Shadrack Mgiba (Shadrack) is married to Daisy and has two daughters, two teenage girls, Thulisile and Knethiwe, and a new baby girl (just two weeks old when Shadrack came over for the tour). He and his family live with Shadrack's parents. Like most of the members of Thula Sizwe, he was born and raised in Shoshanguve. He was born on June 20, 1973 He has been with the group since 1989. His hobbies include reading, watching sports, running, and playing soccer, and, like Alfred, he attends the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa. Shadrack's mother is Tsonga, and his father is Zulu.



### **Ntokoza** (pronounced Nnn-dok-OH-zuh)

Sikhumbuzo Ntokoza Zikalala (Ntokoza) is one of the four newer members of Thula Sizwe, having joined in 2004. He was born on September 11, 1979, and is married to Fikelemi. They have two small boys, Vusi and Themba. Ntokoza was born at Mahlabaini in Kwa-Zulu Natal and attended school in Estcourt. He and his family live in his parents' home. He is fond of reading, playing soccer, and gardening and enjoys fusion music. He started studying music at school, St John's Catholic Church, Estcourt, and attends a Roman Catholic Church.



**Zakhele** (pronounced Za-KAY-luh)

Zobaphi Zakhele Mchunu (Zakhele) is one of the four new members of Thula Sizwe, having joined in 2004. He was born on February 10, 1975, and is married to Buyisile. They have five young children, a boy, Nkululeko and four girls, Nice, Nhobihle, Khonisanani, and Udumiso. On October 8, 2008, Zakhele's sixth child was born, a little boy. He heard about the health of the mother and baby by phone in Connecticut. Zakhele was his parents' oldest child, and he and his family live in his parents' home. He was born in Mahlabatini, Kwazulu Natal, attended school in Estcourt. Like Ntokoza, he has an interest in fusion music, plays soccer, and enjoys gardening. He is a skilled instrumentalist and plays the umvingo for Thula Sizwe (Thula Sizwe have an antique umvingo, a stringed instrument, that was donated to the group by the family of Obed Nxumalo after his death). Zakele started studying music at school, St John's Catholic Church, Estcourt, and attends a Roman Catholic Church.



**Kwenza** (pronounced KWEN-zah)

Kwenza Celumusa Ngubane: Born on Christmas Eve 1981, Kwenza is the youngest member of the group. He joined Thula Sizwe in 2004 along with Ntokoza, Zakele, and Isaac. He is married to Cindy, and they have three young boys, Nkululeko and Temba (five-year-old twins!) and their little brother, Msungaufikile. The second child in his family, Kwenza lives with his wife and son in his parents' home. He was born in Mahlabatini, Kwa-Zulu, Natal and attended school in Estcourt. He enjoys playing soccer. He plays the guitar and concertina, having started studying music at school, St Johns Catholic Church, Estcourt. He attends a Roman Catholic Church.



**Isaac**

Isaac Velaphi Mlambo (Isaac) was born on July 27, 1978. Along with Ntokoza, Zakele, and Kwenza, he joined Thula Sizwe in 2004. He is married to Busiziwe, and they have two little boys, named Njabulo and Sunnyboy and a little girl named Lungile, and a child born right after the 2008 tour ended. Isaac was born in Estcourt, Kwa-Zulu, Natal, and attended school in Estcourt. He was the oldest child in his family and lives in his parents' home. He is an enthusiastic reader and loves singing. He started studying music at his church, Shembe Traditional Church.



**Johannes**

Johannes Magana joined Thula Sizwe about the same time as Abel, in 1988. He was married to Nkele and was born on September 28, 1970 and raised in Soshanguve. He had a little girl named Gladys and a grown son. Sadly, Johannes passed away on August 19, 2010, just before he would have turned 40. He had a very hard life and died of illness far younger than he should have.