

## Cecilia Makiwane—Pioneer African Nurse

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Cecilia Makiwane was born in 1880 at MacFarlane Mission (of the Free Church of Scotland) in the District of Victoria East, 6 miles from Alice—a town less than 60 miles west of East London, then part of the British Cape Colony and now in South Africa. Her father was the Reverend Elijah Makiwane (1850-1928), a pioneer clergyman and the second black minister trained in South Africa to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church. Cecilia never really knew her mother, Maggie Majiza, who died in 1883 when Cecilia was only 2 years old; she had been an assistant teacher at a girls' school in the Lovedale Missionary Institute in Alice.



Cecilia Makiwane worked as a ward nurse for several years at the Victoria Hospital, a mission hospital that was part of the Lovedale mission in Alice. The hospital had been founded in 1898, but it was closed briefly during the Boer War (1899-1902) and was reopened at the close of hostilities in 1902. The South African colonial nursing college in Kimberley (founded in 1877) did not admit black students during this period, but in 1903, the Victoria Hospital instituted a 3-year nursing course. Two black students enrolled in this small program, one of whom was Cecilia Makiwane. Makiwane completed the program and passed the Cape Colonial Medical Council examination in 1907. On January 7, 1908, she became the first black woman on the entire continent of Africa to be licensed as a nurse.

Makiwane never married and became known for her diligence to her ward nursing duties. Her work soon took a great toll on her emotionally and physically, and the hospital eventually granted her an extended leave of absence to recuperate from an unspecified illness. She went to stay with her older sister Daisy (another pioneer—the first Afri-

can woman to earn a degree in mathematics), but she never recovered from her ailments. Cecilia died in Thaba 'Nchu, a small town near Bloemfontein in the former Orange Free State, shortly before the birth of her niece, Noni Jabavu (1919- ), a well-known novelist. More than 2000 people attended the unveiling of a statue of Cecilia Makiwane at the Victoria Hospital in 1977. Nurses in South Africa have traditionally held a day of prayer on January 7 to commemorate Makiwane and the state registration of black professional nurses.

Named in her honor, the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital is a 1450-bed facility in East London (Mdantsane), South Africa, less than 60 miles from Alice. Under the system of apartheid, it was a hospital for black patients only, and in the new South Africa, it remains so by default. A British Broadcasting Corporation report described the underfunded hospital as “a decrepit building of crumbling walls and leaking roofs, where open drains carry dirty water past overcrowded wards,” and metal gates are needed to keep criminals from entering the hospital to steal blankets and medicine.

Cecilia Makiwane was honored philatelically (Scott No. 34) by Ciskei in 1982. Ciskei was a brief-lived, nominal republic (never recognized internationally), 1 of 4 quasi-independent black “homelands” in South Africa under apartheid. It was inhabited primarily by Xhosa peoples, who were relocated there in large numbers in the 1970s. Ciskei was so named because it is on the “cis-” side of the Kei River relative to Cape Town, South Africa; across the river, on the far or “trans-” side, was the republic of Transkei. (Ironically, “Kei” is actually a Khoisan word; the Xhosa call the river “Nciba.”) Ciskei and Transkei, like other “homelands,” ceased to exist with the legal end of apartheid in the early 1990s. In April 1994, the territory became part of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

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