

PERSECUTED FOR BEING WHITE

Feared and loathed by their own community and rejected by whites. South Africa's black albinos inhabit a lonely no-man's land in the world's most colour-conscious nation.



Blondie, pinkie and monkie are just some of the insults Nomasonto Mazibuko has had to endure throughout her life.

Nomasonto suffers from albinism, a congenital disorder in which there is an absence of pigment in the skin. It affects people of all ethnic groups, but in colour-conscious South Africa, being born black without black skin has forced people like Nomasonto to face superstition and discrimination from blacks and whites alike.

Nomasonto was born in Soweto, the second youngest of ten children. Four of her siblings had albinism, and much of her strength comes from the love and support she received in her early childhood.

"People are ignorant," she says. "They don't know what causes albinism."

Nomasonto recently counselled the mother of an albino child. The other children at school didn't want to play with her, touch her or sit next to her, because they thought her condition was contagious. Nomasonto told the girl, "Life is like a garden - you get red, pink, purple and white flowers." "People", she said, "are just the same".

But Nomasonto knows that fell-good metaphors aren't enough to beat discrimination. When she attended the Primary school, life was a silent nightmare. Her family was protective and loving, but at school she was teased and ostracised. To avoid her tormentors, she varied her route to school each day.

Some years later Nomasonto was on her way to a meeting when she overheard a colleague whisper, "Sssh... Here comes Pinkie." What hurts most, she says, is that her colleagues knew she was University educated. "They weren't questioning my intelligence skills or leadership," she says. "They were questioning my colour."

Source: *Marie Claire*, January 1999

WORDS

loathed - disliked very much

endure - undergo

absence -lack

overhear - hear what someone says when he is not talking to you and he doesn't know you're listening

EXPRESSIONS

no-man's land - the land of nowhere

feel-good - optimistic

ostracised - treated in an unfriendly way and not allowed to take part in other people's activities

❖ **Check your vocabulary. Look at the text and find the synonyms of the following words:**

1 – made afraid: _____ 2 – not accepted: _____

3 – lack: _____ 4 – obliged: _____

5 – brothers and sisters: _____ 6 – changed: _____

❖ **Match the sentences a) to e) with the corresponding ones 1) to 5) in order to form correct sentences according to the information in the text.**

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| a) Nomasonto has always suffered | 1) black people, it affects all races. |
| b) Not only did blacks | 2) is the fact that people always question the colour of skin. |
| c) Albinism doesn't only affect | 3) discriminate against her but also whites. |
| d) Whenever she went to school | 4) she had to change her route to avoid being tormented. |
| e) What she feels hurts her the most | 5) from discrimination. |

❖ **Answer the following questions about the text:**

1. Why has Nomasonto always been discriminated?

2. What's albinism?

3. Was she the only in her family who suffered from albinism? Justify your answer.

4. How did she cope with her problem?

5. What do you think she meant when she said "Life was a silent nightmare"?

6. What hurts her most: being questioned for her skill or for her colour? Justify your answer.
