

MY BRILLIANT CAREER

Taking job specs back home again

You trained as a dispensing optician; what is that?

A dispensing optician can work in an optometry practice or at an optical lab, where the spectacle lenses are manufactured. The dispensing optician who works in a practice helps patients choose frames based on their prescription and on the patient's vocation and lifestyle. We then take various measurements of the patient's face that are required to make up the spectacles. The spectacles are made up by a technician, then checked and fitted. We are also trained to dispense contact lenses and show patients how to use them.

What training and qualifications do you have?

I have a national diploma in optical dispensing and recently did a short course in entrepreneurship through Wits Business School's Centre for Entrepreneurship.

Why did you choose to study to be an optician?

Because of all the visits I made to opticians to have my eyes tested, I have worn glasses since I was 10 years old. So it was an environment I was familiar with.

What did you want to be when you were a child?

A nature conservationist. I remember a speech I had to share with my classmates in Grade 3 where I shyly but passionately told my class I wanted to be a nature 'conservationsist'. I now know that this stemmed from my upbringing in the small town of Willowvale in the former Transkei.

What do you find most challenging about your work?

Working as an optician is fulfilling as you are constantly helping others in need. The only challenge for me is working in the retail end of

Yanga Dumalisile is an optician who is setting up an eye clinic in the former Transkei. She speaks to Margaret Harris about how her own poor eyesight as a child inspired her to help others

optometry and attending to those who cannot afford the service we give, so I always wish I could offer it at no charge or at as little a cost as they can afford.

What do you love most about the work you do?

Enhancing a person's vision, the pleasure people express in the difference they find in their eyesight when they put on their new glasses for the very first time. It's something small, but it makes a world of difference.

You have done volunteer work with the Phelophela Health Care Train. Can you tell me about the work?

When I was a student at the Cape Technikon, we were encouraged to volunteer two weeks of our time on the train. It was an awesome experience and very fulfilling. We worked long hours to see as many people per day as possible but some left without being seen due to time constraints.

Did the fact that you were born in the former Transkei influence your decision to set up an eye clinic in the Idutywa region?

I was born in Willowvale in a village called Jinqi in Shixim. Yes, this is the main reason. I approached the head of the Phelophela Health Train, Dr Lynette Coetzee, while doing the entrepreneurship course

and asked her if I could work with her team and start off in primary schools in the Idutywa region. We are in the process of putting this initiative into action.

What role do your studies in entrepreneurship play in your plans for the eye clinic?

Through the course, I learnt about social entrepreneurship. There was one very passionate classmate who shared his ambitions with us of helping the community from which he comes to grow with small agricultural projects. I identified with him in wanting to give back and see my own environment grow and expand in the global village we now live in. I decided the best way I can do that would be by working with a skill I already have.

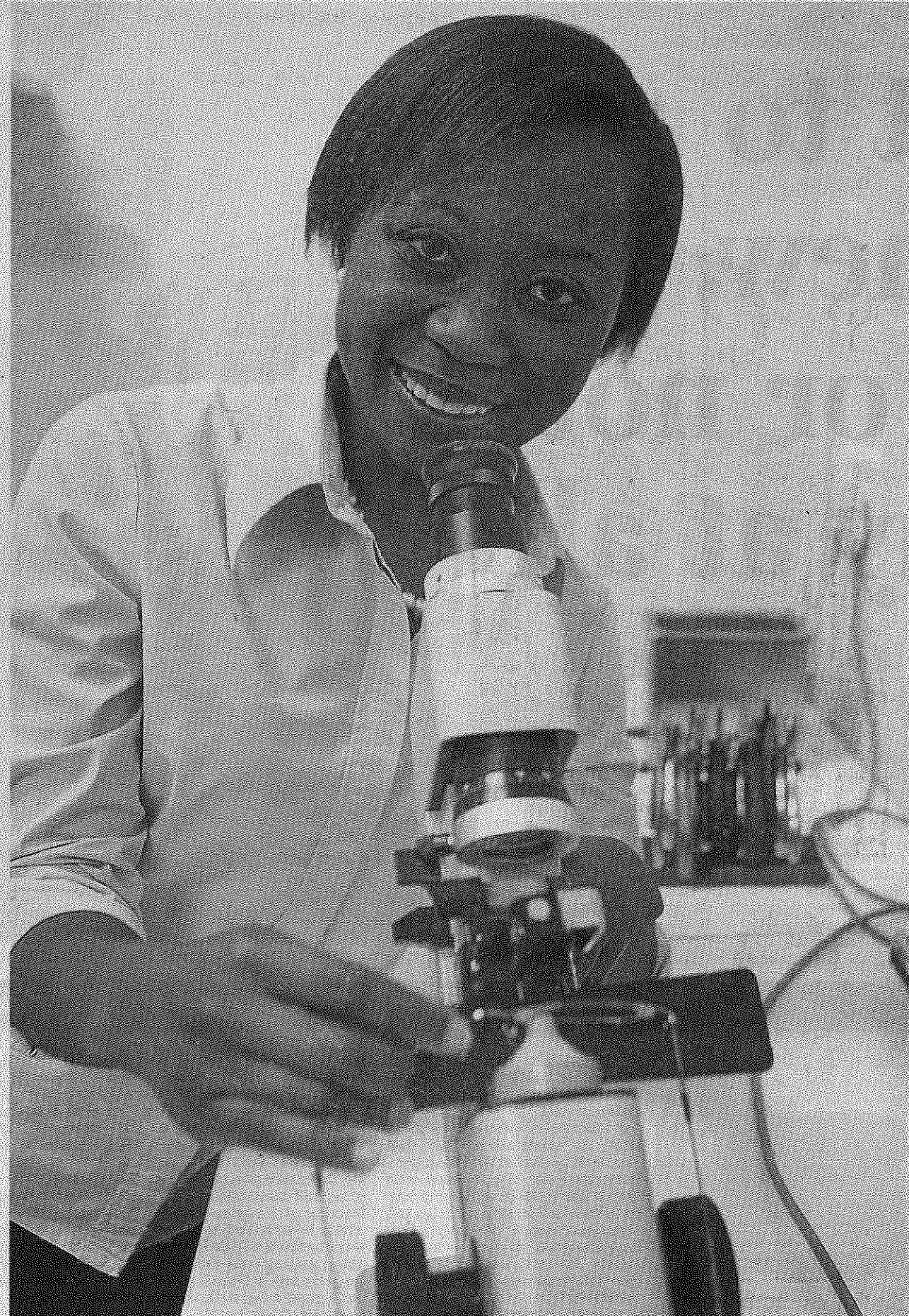
I was privileged enough to have my eyes tested at a young age, so my poor vision was corrected when I was still young. When a child cannot see properly or is visually impaired they soon lose interest in school and reading, which brings down their chances of a bright future.

What time of day do you enjoy the most?

The morning. It signifies a brand new day filled with new opportunities.

What or who inspires you?

Two women have inspired me throughout my life, my mother and her younger sister. They are very strong-willed women who have achieved great things. They were born with a desire to help those in need, mostly from their own pockets as shallow as those pockets are.



FUTURE VISION: Yanga Dumalisile is determined to bring the gift of improved eyesight to others

Picture: SIMON MATHEBULA

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