

HOTSHOT ³

SOLDIERSOLDIER

KHANYISILEMTHEMBU-FONGOQA

words **tanja bosch** picture **alexandra murphy**

Khanyisile is a formidable figure. She stares at me across the desk in her office at campus control and offers me coffee. I remember to start breathing again.

I suppose as an ex-Commissar in Umkhonto we' Sizwe (MK) it's only natural that she exudes a kind of magnetism. Power. Khanyisile does that. She says it was 'patriotic motives which forced me out of a comfortable middle-class family at the age of 21.' I say this must have taken very strong political convictions, but she is modest, 'Ja, but I'm a very rebellious person... a committing person. Once I commit myself to a thing I just do it all round.'

We start talking about her experiences as a woman in MK. 'We were too few and it had different impacts on people. It strengthened some women, but it weakened others. There were 15 women in a camp of about 600 when I underwent my general training. But male comrades were very supportive. If you wanted to make it, let me say, you would, because official policy was very protective of women.'

She gazes into the distance and sighs. 'If you happened to be one of the serious-minded, you suddenly realised what an important task you were doing and you could really rise to untold lengths. I mean a position where you adjust in terms of your own development, and I suppose that's what happened to me. I don't regret the years I lived in MK, though academically I did nothing. I don't regret them because I learnt so much in one space. I learnt so many things, I figure I wouldn't have learnt at that rate anywhere else. I learned to cope with stress, I learned conflict resolution.'

Khanyisile graduated from UCT last year with a BA degree in Political Studies and Drama. She is currently registered for a full-time honours degree in Criminology. Her first lecture is in 45 minutes time but she's still thinking about MK. 'I consider myself very lucky to have been in that situation. It also gave me a chance which very few South Africans have had. In a way it gave me access to the different regions and cultures of SA.'

She speaks, reads and writes ten out of the 11 official languages. 'Most of my languages were perfected in MK. I'm a Sowetan. I picked them up even as a child.' Only Venda is completely foreign to her and she has difficulties speaking Tsonga and Afrikaans as a result of the years she spent outside the country. She's lived in Botswana, Zambia, the GDR and Nigeria for more than a year each, but spent almost all her exiled life in Angola. 'Wherever you went, you would always come back to Angola. That basically was your home.'

'I spent a year in East Germany on a training course and it was tough, but I enjoyed it. And that's where I met my husband.' She smiles at the portrait of a UCT student, graduating this year. It's clear that her family - husband and five-year-old son - mean a great deal to her.


We talk about change. 'To be honest with you, I think most black people want change. Obviously due to historical deprivation, they should be the ones who are more impatient for change. I mean, who doesn't complain of racism in the workplace or at school or wherever? If you talk to people, people still complain. Most will tell you that not much has changed for them on the ground.' And the



solution? 'I still feel the answer lies in a socialist South Africa, such that the urgent task lying ahead would be to strengthen the Communist Party and the trade union movement. For instance, separate amenities are gone, but who cares? Who cares? They don't put food on people's tables. They want people to go and spend money that they do not have.'

I ask about the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). 'From press releases so far, it looks like there are problems with integration in the SANDF. It is a new project, and obviously problems come with change. It's a known fact that journalists are not allowed into bases. If they were perhaps we'd have a clearer picture - people still need to work hard to qualify the word SANDF.'

So, does she support the optional demobilisation of MK cadres from the SANDF? 'I wouldn't. That would be an injustice to the years of sacrifice people spent in MK. And also to those who lost their lives in the struggle for a truly democratic and united South Africa, and to the community at large. But it should be noted that people have got a right to choose. I would urge them not to leave, but to make a final effort towards change.'

Khanyisile holds the position of Crime Prevention and Community Liaison in campus control. Her tasks include co-ordinating various student protection services, crime-awareness related media, community liaising and, 'the difficult one,' maintaining high levels of motivation amongst campus control officers. Her interest in this job stems from her military involvement and she hopes, in the future, to return to the army and become involved in criminal investigation. 

kick start benedict mccarthy

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At night, Nyanga soccer stadium is not difficult to find. Towering above the dark shacks, the floodlights shine like suns. On the bumpy, fenced-in field, one of the stars of the future is also shining.

Benedict McCarthy, forward for local heroes Seven Stars in the Western Cape NSL First Division, is one of South Africa's most promising young soccer players.

Eighteen-year-old McCarthy has an impressive list of achievements to his name. Seven Stars, currently vying for promotion to the Premier League, voted him Young Player of the Year for 1995, and he was joint top goal scorer with 27 goals. McCarthy, known as 'Benito Mussolini' or 'Benny' to his fans and friends, has played in both the South African U23 and U20 squads, and captained the Western Province U20 team to victory in the Inter-Provincials.

On the field, McCarthy is an intense, incisive player with an incredible work-rate. Tonight, when he is substituted in the second half of a violent match that sees fights break out and two red cards, we hurry over to the team bench to take his photograph. But he is so focused that it is difficult to get him to concentrate on looking into the camera. He keeps staring over his shoulder at the match, and seems not even to notice the shouts of the fans behind the fence.

So how does an 18-year-old handle all this pressure?

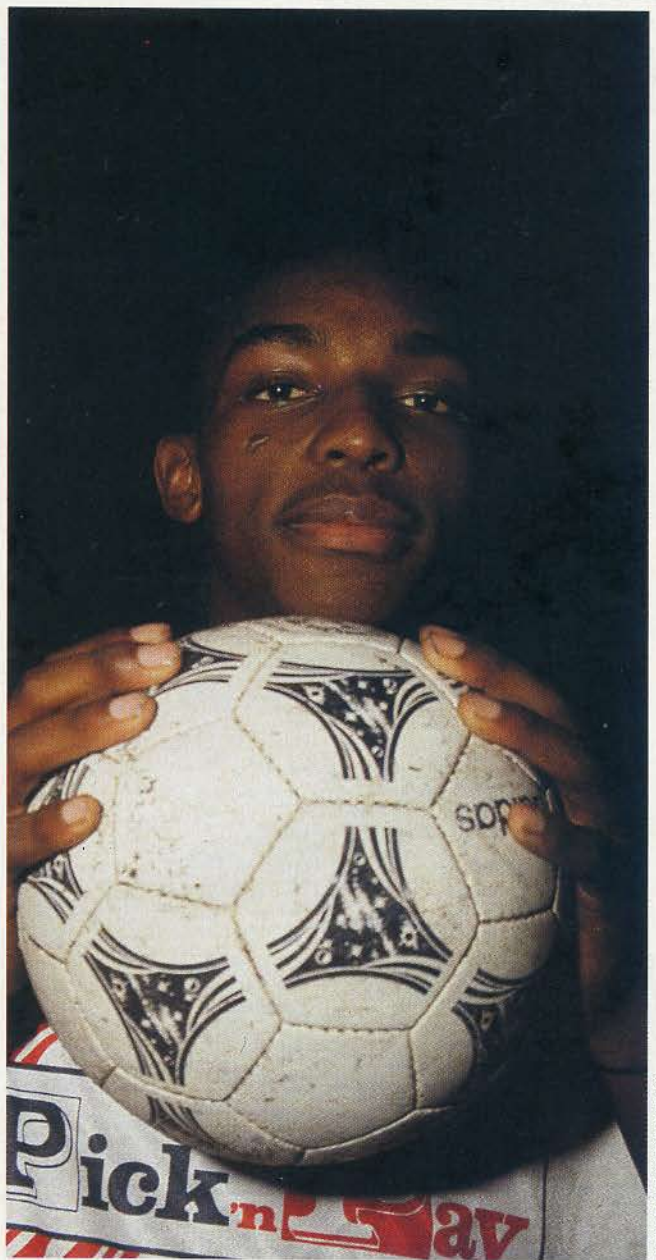
'That's the price one pays for being a big star. You feel the pressure mounting all around you. The fans and my team mates are always expecting me to do something extra special, and I think that's a little unfair. But I love and respect my fans, and I always try and do my best to entertain them.'

So how did he get this far?

'It all started with kicking a ball around in the streets of Hanover Park when I was a kid. My father was a big influence - he taught me the skills, as he was a player for Cape Town Spurs. But my mother was my real inspiration, even though she didn't know anything about soccer. I'd say the real secret of my success is my confidence, I always tell myself that I will do my best. My only fear is of being injured.'

Such youthful confidence could be misconstrued as arrogance, but there's none of that in McCarthy. Despite his growing fame and army of fans, he remains humble. But surely, I ask him, the experience of playing for South Africa at U23 level (against teams like the Manchester United U19s), as well as at U20 level, has had some effect on him?

'It means a lot to me, because I get to learn more and more



PICTURE: ALEXANDRA MURPHY

'I love and respect my fans, and I always try and do my best to entertain them.'

about the game of soccer. But I'm careful not to let such achievements go to my head. All I do is keep my feet on the ground and remain level-headed. Without the support of my team mates, I wouldn't have achieved much.'

As we finish, he can barely conceal his relief at being able to get back to cheering his team on.

FIKA NTOBONGWANA

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Household Name Moshekwa Langa

words *chris roper*

7:30 in the morning, deep in the claustrophobic bowels of the Cape Town Castle, I discover that Moshekwa Langa is a slut. Pouting, pirouetting, practically licking the lens at times, it is obvious that he has a serious lust for the camera. This is in such sharp contrast to the quietly unassuming chap I interviewed the night before that I wonder if he is still drunk. Then I realise the difference: last night, we were dealing in words, the boring signs that rule my conceptual system. This morning, surrounded by the intricate and obscene artworks in the Fault Lines Exhibition at the Castle, we are talking in Moshekwa's language of images.

At 20 years old, Moshekwa is the youngest artist at the exhibition, the 'littles name' as he puts it. He recently returned from his first trip overseas, where he was invited to perform an installation at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin. What was the trip like? 'Striking. All these people actually obeying traffic laws, yet there's dogshit all over the pavements. Europeans don't care about who we Africans are, they just want convenient, potted answers. They're not interested in dialogue, who we are is already in their minds. It's good exposure, I suppose, but in a way it's very bad: they can do whatever they want with us.'

'For my exhibit, I hung up a lot of old maps. On a world map, I used blue tippex to erase all the countries except South Africa. On two old maps of Africa, I scrawled "copyright held in Germany". Then, five days into the show, I went and scratched out my name on all my pieces, except one on which I wrote "destruction and diaspora" over.'

Moshekwa has had an astounding twelve shows since September 1995. The Fault Lines Exhibition at the Castle, which reflects on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is the latest. 'I've been dealing with my own Truth Commission, reflecting on how people have treated me, on the web of deceit that was spun around me at school. "Ek was jonk and naive", I wrote that across a map in Berlin as well. I remember times, coming back from

visiting my grandmother in KwaNdebele, people on the taxi would whisper about me, say I was bewitched or some sort of witchdoctor - just because I was carrying a whole lot of rocks that I had found, and wanted to use for an installation. They used to call me Kwere Kwere, a nasty word for foreigner.'

So how does it feel to be the hottest young black artist in South Africa? 'I'm not conned by my fame. Politically, and at this time, I'm just conveniently here. There's no better time to be a young, black, well-spoken guy. A lot of people talk about me as an object somewhat removed from everyday reality. Nevertheless, I am convinced of the integrity and worth of my own work. White critics are really the ones who decide who the established black artists are, and who the young, avant-garde black artists are. It's all meaningless to me, I'm non-aligned.'

Moshekwa's next step is to get back to the job that actually brings in some money, namely producing videos for *The Works* on SABC (he recently compiled one on body modifications). The kind of art he produces is not conducive to selling for heaps of money. For example, his piece at the Castle, which he describes as having 'a visceral vividness', consists of hanging strips of brown paper that have been coated with egg, honey and condensed milk. The floor is covered with 'household products': Dettol, Jeyes Fluid, broken eggs and icing sugar. Very olfactory, but you're not going to hang it in your Sandton townhouse.

But some of Moshekwa's art is mobile: his *Skins* (1995) is being exhibited later this year at a show in Portugal called 'Don't Mess With Mr In-Between'. An apt title for Moshekwa himself, an artist who hovers enticingly between sexiness and smelliness.

PICTURE: ALEXANDRA MURPHY

