



Interview with: Kudzy (12)
Interviewed by: Charlotte
Date of interview: 28 February 2017
Travel: Zimbabwe – South Africa

Charlotte: The young lady in this interview has given her consent to the recording of this interview. Tell me, where did you come from and when did you come to Durban?

Kudzy: I come from Zimbabwe and I first came to Durban in 2013.

Charlotte: Tell me about your very first day in Durban.

Kudzy: My very first day in Durban ... I arrived at the beginning of March by air. I arrived at the airport in the evening and I had a taxi pick me up from the airport to take me to where I was staying. So I didn't see much. I was a bit confused—you know how you feel when you are in a new place and you really don't know what's going on. But I was very excited to come to a place by the sea as I come from a landlocked country. The thought of it was very exciting and I couldn't wait for the next morning. So I would say that my first day was the next morning.

Fortunately, the route I took to work was along the shore, so I could see everything. I was on my phone taking pictures and I was thrilled and excited by the beauty of it. It was my first time ever seeing so much water because we are only used to lakes and dams. So, it was really exciting, even though it was a bit frustrating because I could not communicate with anyone because most people here are Zulu-speaking. So there was no one I could talk to and I did get lost, but in my getting lost I was very excited because I was seeing this new place—it was so beautiful and so different from my country. In my country we do not have an advanced road network and now I was seeing roads going over and underneath each other and I was like: Wow! This country is like heaven. I was so thrilled.

So, that was my first day. Going home after work I had to figure out where to get off the taxi and how to get home. I was fortunate enough that the people who worked with me helped me with advice about where to go and how to get around. It was fairly okay. I didn't realise that there may be difficulties—I was just so excited to see this new place.

Charlotte: Tell me, you mentioned arriving in Durban and getting a taxi to where you were staying. Did you arrange accommodation before coming or did you have people you were coming to stay with here?

Kudzy: I had people I was coming to stay with. I was coming to stay with my sister. The company that I was working for paid for the flights for me from Zimbabwe to Durban and they also paid for transport from the airport to where I was going to.

Charlotte: Tell me, how was it living with your sister?

Kudzy: Living with my sister was great because she is my sister. At least your sister is someone you can understand. But it was also challenging because she stays in a bachelor flat. I had to sleep on the couch for three months. That was not very exciting. Of course, everything else about being in Durban was exciting, but I dreaded going home. I dreaded sleeping on the couch—it was not exactly comfortable. Finally, we got one of those tiny, tiny mattresses. After sleeping on it every day for a month, it was just like a blanket on the floor. I had to fold it three or four times to feel comfortable. So staying with my sister was good, but it was also a bit challenging because she stayed with her husband and her in-laws there too. They thought that I was treated better than everyone because in our country we think that the wife's relatives are treated better than the husband's relatives ... and with us it was just the same





because I also contributed towards rent and groceries. So it was interesting—how on first coming to South Africa I was sleeping on the couch and the floor.

Charlotte: How did you find contributing towards rent and groceries when you were just starting to work?

Kudzy: My parents had always told me that it was something I had to do. For me, it was a token of appreciation to thank my sister for letting me stay, especially as rent was quite pricey. I was just beginning. I was at the lowest level in the company so I didn't have enough money to rent my own place. Living with her and contributing towards rent was okay. I felt it was a way of showing appreciation. At the same time, it was difficult because I didn't have the liberty of buying what I wanted to eat. I would have to think of everybody else. I would have to think that oh, they don't eat this but I love this. But if I bought it I would have to share it with everyone else. So that did not really suit me, but I was okay with it.

Charlotte: Can we just go to the issue of you working in the company. Tell me how you found that job because you said you were at the lowest level. So how was it for you?

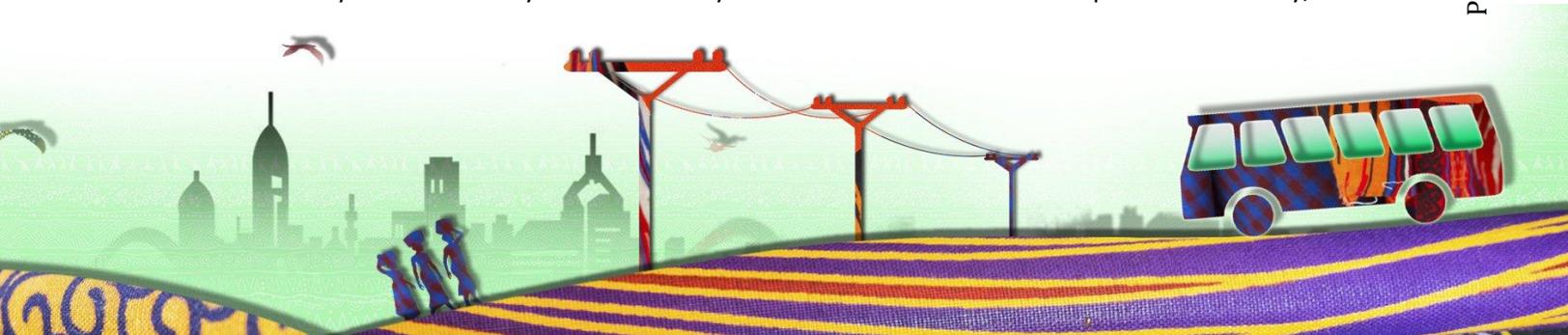
Kudzy: The first day was extremely overwhelming. You know, when you get into a new company they tell you this is what you are supposed to be doing. I felt like I could do this. But it's a learning process—you learn and you get used to the system. Being at the lowest level, I was always motivated to do my best so that they would give me a better position. I remember during that time that the person who was my boss had exactly the same qualifications as me, but because I was a foreigner and I didn't have much work experience I had to be in that position. I was amazed that she had already been versed in everything and knew more than I knew, but we had the same qualifications. I worked hard in getting educated and it was quite demeaning to work in a position where I felt I deserved better. But there is nothing you can do about it when you work in a foreign country. It's difficult.

Charlotte: Can you elaborate more on the kind of work you were doing and the relationships that you had with other people in the company?

Kudzy: I was an intern. I mostly did research. Everything that other people did not want to research was my job. We wrote articles and you would correct the articles for the bosses which was not fun. It was an international organisation. We had many people from different countries and some of them were from my country, so that made it easier to get around. I remember the first day we got there. In my country you only get a coffee maker when you're the elite. So, the first time I got into the kitchen and saw this coffee maker, I didn't know how to use it. I looked at the fridge—it just looked like part of the wall and I didn't know how to operate that either. So, I had to wait for someone to come in and watch them do it: Ohhhh, that's how it's done. I think it took me a whole month to actually figure out how to make coffee for myself. I would just do it in the traditional way: boil my water and put in my sugar and milk. People would always ask me why I didn't use the coffee maker and I was too embarrassed to tell them that this is my first time to see something so complicated like and I didn't know how to use it. It was quite embarrassing telling people that I had never seen these things in my life. But it was also interesting. I would call my and sister and say: Can you imagine a machine like this? I took pictures on my phone and sent them. But generally the people in the office were friendly and they would show me around and show me how to work and make sure I was doing the right thing. It was quite interesting.

Charlotte: You spoke about getting lost the first time you wanted to go to work. Can you tell me about that experience?

Kudzy: On the first day the company paid for a taxi. They actually sent a cab to take me from my house to work. They said it was only for the first day because I was still new to this place. I said: Okay, that's





fine, I'll asked the taxi driver how much it was. Apparently it was quite pricy so I couldn't do it the second day for myself. So, I asked my sister where to get a taxi and she said I needed to get one by the Workshop. I had to take a taxi from home to the Workshop. There I couldn't figure out which taxis were going where. I would spend about 30 minutes asking the taxi people there. It was very difficult because I couldn't understand their language and some of them could not speak in English, so they would throw me from one place to the next. "Go to that one." "No, sisi, go to that one." And I would look at the time because I was supposed to start at 8am and it was now 9am. I didn't have a sim card. My phone was still on roaming and I was out of airtime and couldn't communicate with anyone. I actually had to call my sister and ask her to call home and ask them to send money to my phone. So, finally I got into this taxi. An Indian man was driving in the taxi and he said: "Sisi, you're in the wrong taxi but come anyway. I will drop off everyone first and then take you to the right taxi which will drop you off right by the gate." He was a very nice person. That's when I realised that there some very nice people in Durban. It was great but I was [under pressure] because I was late and it was just my second day. I thought: Oh, my word! I finally got to the office at 10.15am and everyone had finished the meeting. It was weird—this young lady arrives only now! I explained to them and they understood. I told them that after being lost, I would now know the right places to go. I now knew where I was supposed to get off and how far I was supposed to walk. The funny thing was that the place where I got off was the same place where I was supposed to get on. How I got lost was that I was supposed to cross the road but didn't.

Charlotte: You also referred to your difficulty with communicating with the local people. How did you find that, especially on the first day that you got lost?

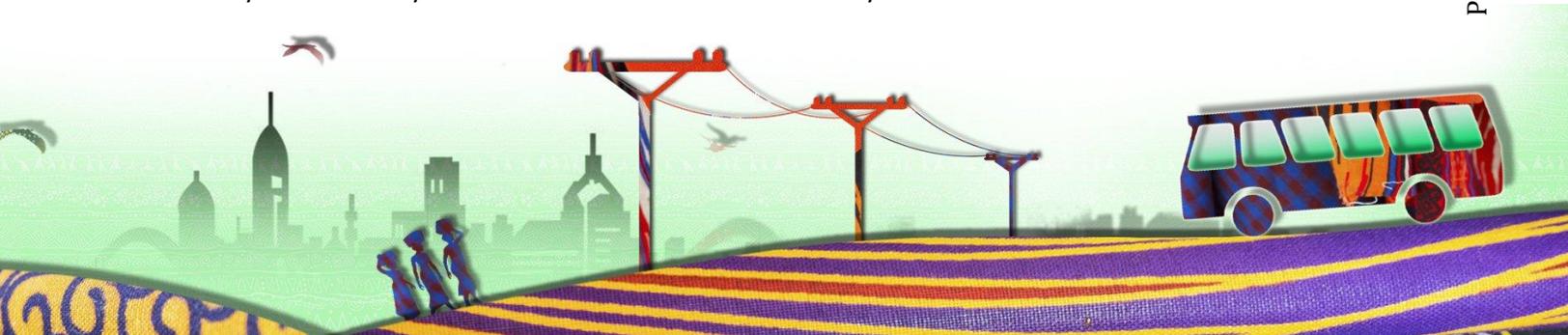
Kudzy: For me, it was very difficult because they do not speak in English at all. I think it's just something that they have: they refuse to speak in English. They don't even want to try to speak in English, so you would go and say hi and then they would continue to respond in Zulu and I don't understand Zulu. So you would have to go and look for someone who was really nice and would tolerate you and listen to you. That was not a pleasant experience. Even now I am still learning Zulu and it's quite difficult. It's not pleasant. I have always to be trying to communicate with them. I understand that a person can learn a language between the age of 0 to 7 and after that it's very difficult because some people learn different languages fast and some people are slow. I think I fall under the slow people because for me languages are very difficult. Even when I was at school it was quite challenging for me. Sometimes I would just think: Eish ... I should just go back home because you want to go to a place but no one is talking to you. But I was also told that sometimes if you talk to the wrong people they will rob you. So, it was quite challenging and I got lost many times.

Charlotte: Because you couldn't communicate in Zulu, can you give a few examples of how people treated you?

Kudzy: They would just ignore me or they would just stare at me and walk away. Some of them would try, and the nice ones would try and get someone who understands English to help you out. But sometimes they would just ignore you or walk away or look at you funny and I would think that these people are going to rob me and I would have to disappear.

Charlotte: How were you living after the three months that you started working?

Kudzy: After three months I was fortunate enough, thank God, that they extended my permit and contract. They had given me a special type of permit because I was on probation. After that, I had to go back to Home Affairs in Pretoria. There they told me that my type of permit was only extendable in my home country. So I went home to Zimbabwe and they said I should not have come back home and





that I should go back to South Africa. Then I came back to South Africa, and they told me to go back to Zimbabwe. Of course, I didn't have a job there. The company had said they would pay for my flights but that they could not continue paying. They gave me a deadline to fix my paperwork by 1 August if I still wanted my job. So I went back to Home Affairs with all the paperwork that I needed, but they just would not give me my permit. So, I went back to Zimbabwe and I sat waiting for them to respond. By the time they responded they had rejected my permit and so I was back at square one again, and coming back without the proper paperwork was very difficult. At that time, I was just praying for a miracle. That's when I got a scholarship to study for my doctorate at Durban University. It was around August, September. So I then went back to Home Affairs with an application to study instead of to work. I got my permit back and returned as a student. That meant I couldn't go back to work because it was past the deadline and my job was not there anymore.

Charlotte: Tell me how you felt as you were being sent back and forth?

Kudzy: It was devastating. It was extremely emotionally draining. I had all the paperwork in place but they would just not say yes. This is the worst part of working in a foreign country: you cannot do anything without the right paperwork. Even if you have the right paperwork it is in the hands of some mean or nice Home Affairs officer to decide whether or not they will give you this permit. The lady, I think, just didn't want to do it or she was in a bad mood every time I went there. So, it was extremely challenging and stressful. I didn't know what else to do. You just have to wait because it is something that you cannot change. There are things that you can change and be very happy about that, and there are things you cannot change because you have no control over them. So I just had to wait. Knowing that I had a job but could not do it was very demotivating. There was someone who didn't know you and didn't accept the paperwork. It wasn't an enjoyable feeling. I was just praying for something to happen. It was one of the worst experiences of my life. Even now I am afraid of Home Affairs. I am terrified of going to that office even if I know I have the right paperwork. I just don't like going there. It's not something you look forward to—you actually dread going there.

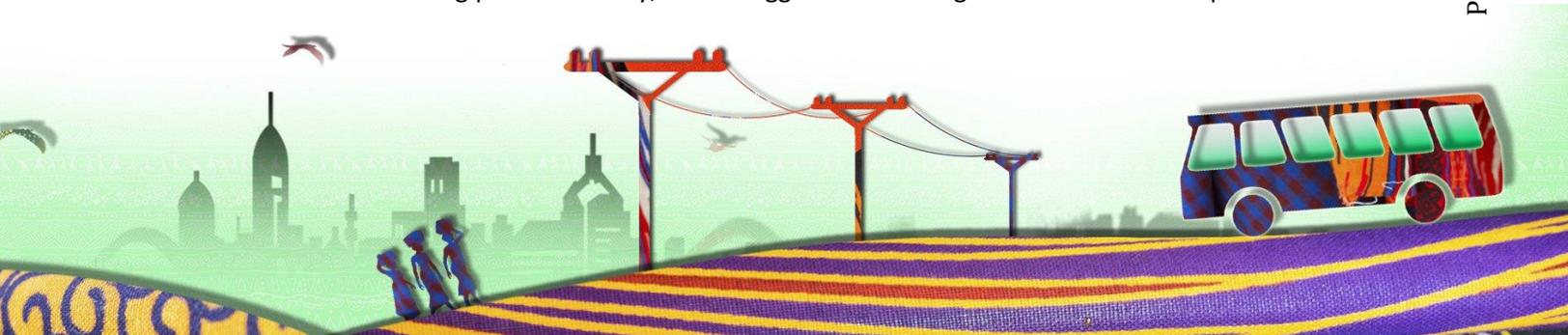
Charlotte: After you got the scholarship and came back, were you still living with your sister and her husband?

Kudzy: After I got the scholarship and I came back, I moved into a student residence because it was closer. I was also tired of sleeping on the couch. I figured that if I had a scholarship I might as well use the money to pay for my own bed. So I moved into residence. I would see my sister on weekends instead of every day.

Charlotte: And how was it beginning your PhD?

Kudzy: Beginning a PhD was challenging and exciting at the same time. It was challenging because my supervisor thought I was too young to be doing my PhD. She was kind of racist and she made it very hard for me. I remember that we worked for six months on my proposal before she okayed it and gave me permission to go to the next level. But when I submitted my work, she told me my work was rubbish. I was devastated. She did that so many times that I eventually cancelled my registration. She was a racist and mean woman. She told me that people like me do not belong in academia but instead on a billboard somewhere because a pretty face is not meant to be teaching other people. So that is how I ended up deregistering for the rest of the year.

During that time, it wasn't easy to be in Durban. I had come for the purpose of studying but was studying no more and I had nothing to do. I tried to change my study permit to a work permit, but that didn't happen. You know how Home Affairs is: they told me that I needed to be registered with a board which is another long process. Finally, it was suggested that I register in a different department. I did





so and one of the guys said he knew how that supervisor would give foreign students a hard time. They understood me and said if I had a topic and a supervisor I could re-register. So I looked for a supervisor. We sat down together and looked for a tentative topic to work on. I registered again and started the whole process from the beginning. It was now 2015 and I finally got the opportunity to get back into the system and begin the whole process again.

Charlotte: When you were still with the supervisor who you said was racist, how did you feel?

Kudzy: I felt inadequate. You know, there are certain things you know you can do because you know your capabilities. I am not a student who has ever failed. When I was working with her I felt as if I was a waste student. She made me feel as if I wasn't capable of doing anything and she would demean me constantly. I remember she constantly told me that I should go back to Zimbabwe. She said that's where I belonged. But then she is also a foreigner. But she just felt that because I was black and from a country that was struggling I didn't deserve to be in the system. So I felt worthless. I actually forgot that I had a master's degree. I remember a time she said she wanted to see my master's thesis because she believed I wrote rubbish then too. I said I had graduated with first class and that she was insulting the person who had supervised me and the institution that I was in, and she said that, yes, that's what she meant. For me it was quite emotional, quite disturbing. I actually got depressed. This was what I had been doing all my life and I was good at it—I love academia. Then someone comes out of the blue and wants to crush you. You feel that you don't have a purpose anymore. You feel like you have been living a lie. I had written public exams and passed. All of a sudden this woman was saying that maybe it was a miracle and that I really was not a good student. I felt bad. I felt demeaned, worthless and inadequate. I wouldn't wish that feeling on anyone.

Charlotte: Moving on from the point where you started doing your PhD again, how has life been generally?

Kudzy: Life has been okay. I thank God I was able to start with a new supervisor who only focused on your work and how to improve you. That has been good and everything else has been good. It's difficult lifting yourself out of depression and being positive, and telling yourself that you are going to be happy today and you are not going to allow anyone to tell you that you cannot do anything. I believe that as long as you believe in yourself, you can do anything. It hasn't been an easy road, but it has been better because when you surround yourself with positive people and people who believe in you, things are better.

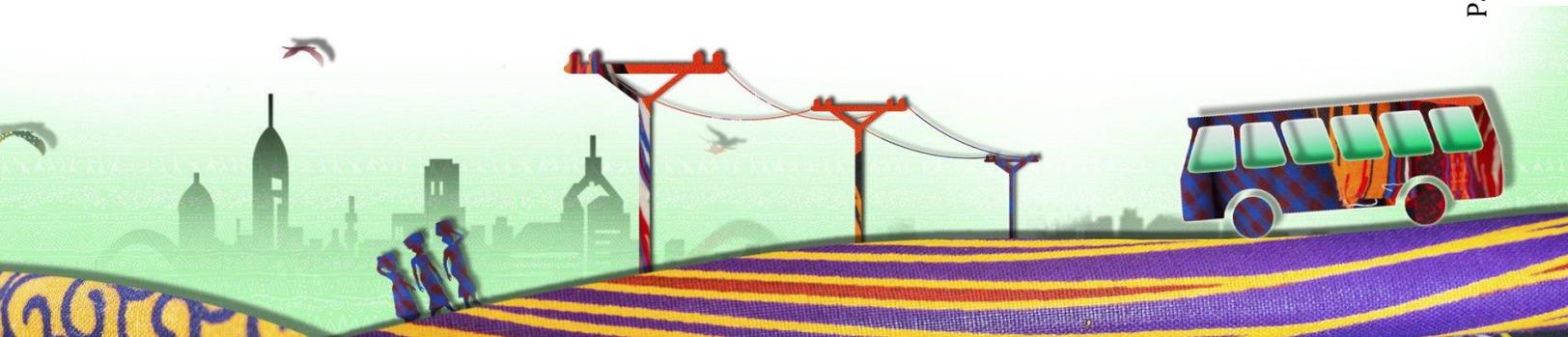
Charlotte: And then, socially—tell me about your relations with other people and the bridges you have built here with people?

Kudzy: From the time I came it has been good socially. I don't have a lot of Zulu friends. I don't know why. But I have friends from church. It's a good community but very few of them are Zulu-speaking. I've got friends from work—some of them are South African—and they are really nice. So I am building my life socially. Your social circle when you are a kid is made up of people you know and trust. Now in my social structure I am having to build trust and dependence and friendships. It is a totally new journey, but it's interesting. We meet people from different places. I have friends from Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. This is quite interesting because you are learning new cultures and building relationships with people from places you never even heard of. I would never have known people from such countries.

Charlotte: Are you married?

Kudzy: No, I am not married.

Charlotte: And how did you find Durban as a single young woman who came from Zimbabwe to establish a life here?





Kudzy: I always thought it is better to have someone to discuss your problems with. I admired my sister because when things were difficult I had [someone to talk with] ... Being single you feel your problem is your problem. If you don't solve it, no one will. When I didn't have anyone to talk with, it was quite challenging and difficult. I thought that even if I tell my sister there was no way she was going to drop whatever she was doing and immediately come to help me with it. But this takes time. I pray that one day there is someone I can ask when I don't have rent. Right now, if I don't have rent, I have to make a plan and do something about it. Being single is quite a challenge but I think it also teaches you how to be self-sustaining, not dependent on others but dependent on yourself.

Charlotte: Can you tell me what emotions you went through knowing that your problem was your problem?

Kudzy: I was angry at some point. If there was no one that would help me fix my problem, or chip in to help, I would be angry and sad. I constantly called my mom and said I'm coming home, I cannot deal with this. I think it was only from late last year that I've stopped telling my mum that I am coming back home. I have been trying to deal with my own problems. As a last resort I would call home and ask for money to be sent, but that's a great blow to me because I am supposed to be the one sending money. I have siblings there and am supposed to be helping them. So it was quite challenging to be always asking for money because things were difficult. That was a very low blow.

Charlotte: Tell me about some of your good experiences here in Durban?

Kudzy: Good experiences here in Durban? I have a lot.

Charlotte: A few examples?

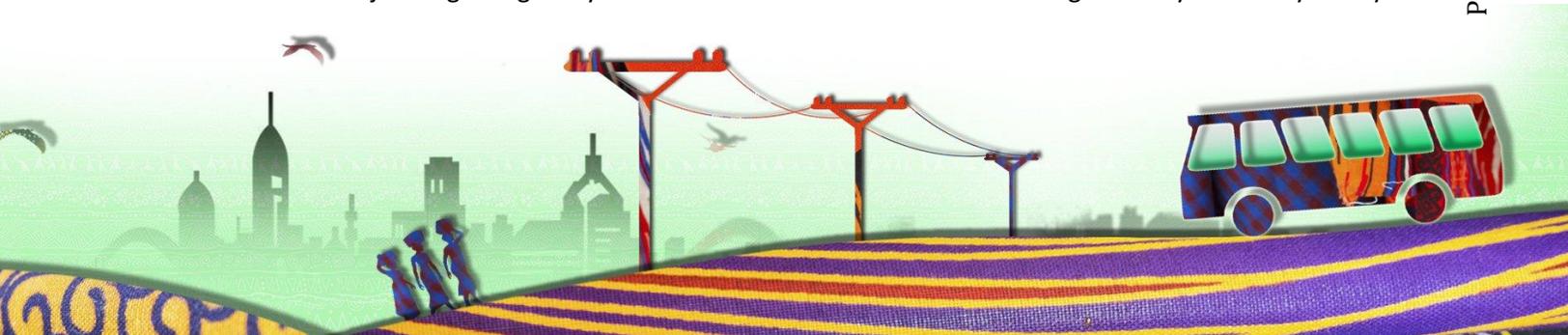
Kudzy: Travelling, seeing Durban—I really enjoyed that. I enjoyed meeting a community through the church, a community that supports me, especially when I was depressed and when I had endometriosis and had to go through surgery to get the growth on my womb removed. That was a very difficult time but I had a community. I had friends around me. At first when I was sick I couldn't tell my mother because she would be worried to know that I had to go through the surgery on my own. That was challenging. You would realise that there are some people who are just able to be around you, to encourage you and be positive for you. That was a highlight—to know that even if you're in a foreign place there are people who will stand by you, a group of people you can count on. My work has been interesting. You see yourself grow and impact other students' lives. That has been great.

And the weather in Durban is beautiful. It's really beautiful.

I think for me every day is a highlight because we are learning and growing. A lot of things have changed. I have actually become an adult in Durban. I am responsible for my own things. I have my own place and my own car which means I am growing. So that's a highlight. When I first began I was sleeping on someone else's couch and now I have my own place which is furnished. I can drive myself around. I have a steady income and I am able to help people. That's an interesting feeling. So, the highlight of being in Durban is that I have seen myself grow into someone although someone had actually told me that I did not have potential. I am blooming into something. I am almost done with my doctorate which is a great thing and I am excited. I have worked extremely hard. It's been exciting, but also eye-opening and enlightening.

Charlotte: As a foreigner what are some of the worst experiences you have had in Durban?

Kudzy: The worst experience was working with a racist. Also, during this time I was sick and found I was served last because I produced my passport instead of my ID. That was at the time when xenophobic attacks were just beginning. They would serve me last because I was a foreigner. They would say: "Why





don't you go to your country and get served there?" They would even misdiagnose my illness just to get me out of the hospital. Before I discovered that I had endometriosis I went to many hospitals looking for help, but they wouldn't necessarily help me because I am a foreigner. So, for me, that was the worst experience—that they help you before they realise that you're not South African. Then they do not help you as they would the next South African. So for me that has been the worst experience and also a learning. You can be the best at an interview, but because you are not a South African you will not get the job. If you are the most qualified person and the best candidate, if you don't have a South African ID you won't get the job. I wanted to send money home last week but they told me I couldn't send it because I don't have an ID. I had a passport which is a form of ID but because I did not have a South African ID I could not send money home. I had to search for someone who was just an ordinary person, who didn't even have any of the qualifications that I had, and I wondered about the criteria they actually use. It's an interesting feeling, but also traumatising.

Charlotte: How did you overcome the sickness?

Kudzy: I went for the operation and they removed the growth from outside my womb. Then I was put on medication for the next six months where my menstrual cycle was stopped so that I could see if I was recovering. The doctor said I had endometriosis. When they operated on me they said I had tiny growths. I had to go through therapy to calm my nerves. I had a lot of painkillers and I was encouraged to have positive people around. The pills worked, so I have just been on medication to control the pain. I know I will always have this condition but I have medication daily and I have check-ups. That's how it is—a work in progress.

Charlotte: You said that you fell sick at a time when xenophobic attacks were just starting again in Durban. How was that experience?

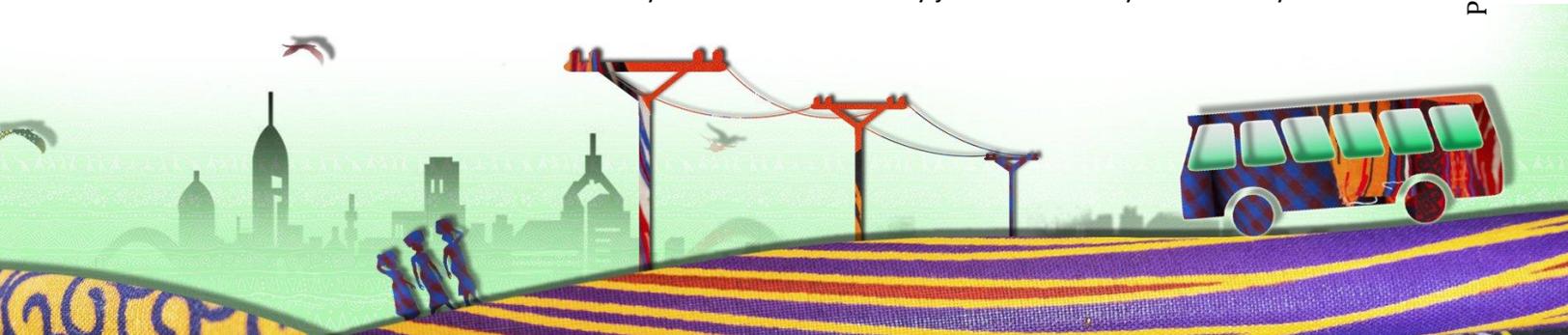
Kudzy: I only had this experience in hospitals because I am a light-coloured Zimbabwean. My skin is so light that, funnily enough, they would never ask me for my ID. They would just assume I am South African. So I just experienced discrimination in offices and hospitals where people would actually see my ID and would say: "You're a foreigner". I think I look like some of the people here. You can only tell that I am a foreigner when you see my ID or speak to me. Then you would pick up my accent. But normally, when they would stop a taxi they would never notice. I would tell my mum that they have never stopped me on the road, because they think I am also Zulu. So, for me, moving around in the streets was okay. I would be lying if I said I saw discrimination, that is, besides the unspoken discrimination in offices and the xenophobic attacks in public places. That's where I felt that because I am not a South African, they were treating me in this way.

Charlotte: Just going back to the fact that you are a single lady living alone here in South Africa ... although you had your sister, how did you feel about the rest of your family being at home and not with you here?

Kudzy: It was lonely, very lonely. As I said before, I really wanted to go back home many times. It's a lonely place to be. There is no place like home. When you are at home you can have anything. Right now I constantly ask my mother to come and my siblings to visit. That's how I have been coping. I know that at some point in time they will visit, so I don't miss them a lot. That's how it's been.

Charlotte: Are there any other comments you would like to make pertaining to how you as a woman dealt with living in Durban, especially as a foreign woman?

Kudzy: Not really. It's just that I would like to see change in discrimination—in how to get a job and how to actually receive services. I don't think there is anything to discriminate against me from getting access to services. Sometimes when you are in the bank they just don't serve you because you are a





foreigner or because you are producing a passport instead of an ID. For me, that's something I think needs to be addressed. We are all equal and we are all contributing the same to the growth of this economy, so I think we should be treated equally and not differently.

Charlotte: And in your personal experience, have you met other foreign women who are going through the same or even worse situations?

Kudzy: Ja, I have met other foreign women who just say the same thing—I did not get this job because I am a foreigner. It's something that's there and we cannot do anything because this is not our country. We are here to work and so we have to find a way to go through it.

Charlotte: Can you tell me about how you are living now?

Kudzy: How?

Charlotte: Where are you staying? How have you moved on from being in res to where you are now?

Kudzy: I currently rent a flat in Morningside, about nine kilometres from campus. I either take a taxi or I drive. It's better this way; it feels more like home. I moved out of res because my family visits often and I wanted to have a place where I was not asked about who was visiting. The res did not allow families to come over. That's why I moved. So, I have grown. I think it was a positive step because now I am able to have family over which is a good thing.

Charlotte: And do you see yourself actually building a life in Durban?

Kudzy: Ja, I think so because I have a job here and am planning on building a life here and praying for a better job soon.

Charlotte: Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Kudzy: No.

Charlotte: I would like to thank you very much for participating in the study and actually allowing me to interview you. I wish you the best in life.

Kudzy: Thank you very much.

