

# FOREWORD

**A** *Memoir to Sons and Daughters* accomplishes several remarkable things, making it truly worthy of high praise. The book skillfully guides the reader through a landscape of diverse emotional experiences, evoking a rich tapestry of feelings along the way. Here, you accompany an individual on a journey through life, which, in hindsight, reveals the hand of God intervening in the affairs of men.

Written by a student of history, this memoir paints a nuanced interpretation within the broad history of South Africa, demonstrating the texture and complexities of the country's past.

Dan Nkosi's story, though personal, resonates with universal themes and contains sections which may reflect your own experiences while offering a wealth of lessons to carry with you. Written by the wisest person I know, who also happens to be my father, this book is not just for me and my siblings but for all sons and daughters—not least because my father worked with and influenced young people throughout his working life. Many, in fact, saw and embraced a father figure in him.

The book will leave you with a profound appreciation for both your own history and the present moment, reminding us that the present is always influenced by the past. *A Memoir to Sons and Daughters* serves as a poignant reminder that our parents were once children themselves—a truth many of us often overlook. This book invites readers to see their parents through a new lens and to understand that the shared struggles and challenges we face help shape who we are.

A remarkable piece of work, Dad!

**Nkosikhona Sean Nkosi** (Shabangu)

## CHAPTER 1

# ORIGINS

*“There are shades of all of our stories in each of our stories.”*  
- Dan L. Nkosi.

In a perfect, utopian world, everyone would chronicle their lives, each with all its vicissitudes, ups and downs, so that those who are at the dawn of the path of life can have multitudes of first-hand reference manuals from which to pick and discard life's lessons, as their circumstances dictate. As dynamic as the world is, with its ever-changing seasons, circumstances and situations, it is a truism that each person's journey through life, with its particular and peculiar nooks, crannies and topographies, has enough similarities and commonalities with those of others, thus making it worthwhile for the younger and successive generations to observe their elders in action and, better still, to read their life stories and gain insights to plan and pave their own paths.

The life story at the centre of this non-fiction narrative and recording it in a book, is a response and a modest attempt at answering to the aspiration expressed above of a utopia where all get to detail their lives, so that triumphs and successes are amplified and missteps and acts of folly, having been squeezed of all their inherent lessons, are mitigated and avoided. As this assignment is being restarted (after it was started, abandoned and started and abandoned several times in nearly twenty years!), the country and the world are in the grip of a ferociously ravaging virus called COVID-19, which by January 2021, had been feeding on humanity since around November 2019. The ignominious virus began in Wuhan, China, where it is believed to have originated, though it reared its horrible and utterly devastating head in the other parts of

the world around February 2020. (The writing of this story continued until early 2025.)

The advent of the COVID-19 virus came as a huge shock to the world, but even this unexpected colossal disruption to humanity and many others similar to it previously, cannot annul the fact that though life in the world is, by its nature, dynamic and hardly predictable, there are discernible patterns that run as threads throughout all our lives. Amidst the undisputed constancy of change in life, which constancy is itself a discernible common thread in life, there are enough other constant threads of varying discernibility that suggest that humans can learn from looking at their footprints and those of their forebears. I have, therefore, decided to document both the patterns that played themselves, almost commonly in my life, as they are likely to have done in the lives of many others, but also those episodes in my life that have been peculiar to me. For none of us exists as an island; the wind that blows in our faces continues to do so in many others. The same rain that we celebrate as a giver and nurturer of life and then complain about as a destroyer of our crops, is celebrated and mourned by others, both near and far to us. The lessons learnt in our lives on how to tame and harvest the rain; drill through and flatten big mountains, when chronicled, serve posterity enormously.

This narrative combines as an expression and a celebration of my immense and unending gratitude to the One who, in many instances unbeknown to me, has steered my life, lifting me out of a countless number of dangers, including engineered and choreographed shades of darkness that I have had to go through. Every time I look back at some of the episodes of my life, I struggle to believe that I have made it this far. In climbing the hills and mountains set on my life's path, I have fallen, faltered and acquired a few bruises in the process and pulled myself up each time. With all of that, I must, however, confess that I can relate to the feeling expressed by Steve Farber in his book, *Greater Than Yourself*, that there have also been moments in my life when things have just lined up, without my knowledge or influence. Like him, I have felt, during those moments, as if someone (some force, or power!) was executing a preconceived plan to make all the random pieces of my life fit together.