

"Banana Canaan Sodindo: A Biography," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, eds, *Dictionary of African Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Banana, Canaan Sodindo (1936–2003), nationalist politician, first titular president of independent Zimbabwe, statesman, peace broker, clergyman, author, soccer administrator, academic, poet, and journalist, was born on 5 March 1936 at Esiphezini, in Essexvale, now Esigodini, District near Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia. The versatile Banana's father, Aaron, was a migrant laborer from Malawi while his mother, Jese, was a Zimbabwean Ndebele woman. Banana married Janet Mbuyazwe in 1961; the marriage produced three sons and a daughter. Banana attended Mzinyati primary school and Tegwani High School. He trained as a teacher at Tegwani Training Institute and then attended Epworth Theological Seminary, resulting in his ordination as a Methodist preacher in 1962. Subsequently he worked as a Methodist schools manager, principal, chairperson of the Bulawayo Council of Churches, and member of the Rhodesian Christian Council and World Council of Churches. In the 1970s, Banana attained a B.A. Honors in Theology through distance learning from the University of South Africa and an M.A. in Theological Studies from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Banana's breakthrough on the national scene came in 1972 when he was appointed vice-president of the African National Council (ANC). The Bishop Abel Muzorewa-led ANC was formed to coordinate African opposition to the 1971 Anglo-Rhodesian proposal for the settlement of the Rhodesian crisis. The ANC also sought to fill the political void created by the imprisonment of nationalist leaders and the proscription of leading political parties, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), by the Ian Smith regime. During the Pearce Commission hearings to test opinion on the Anglo-Rhodesian proposal, Banana assumed greater visibility as an articulate spokesperson for the ANC. Africans emphatically opposed the proposal because it was a deal to maintain white socioeconomic privileges exclusively brokered by white people and for white people. The proposal did not guarantee African majority rule and universal adult suffrage since it mandated the establishment of three voters' rolls based on race,