

INTERVIEW: Joyce Dipale, Tiego Masinga (husband), Tsanki Lekgoatla (brother)

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 11 April 2007

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Johannesburg Central Police Station

Q: Could you tell us your names and when you were detained at John Vorster Square?

A: [Tsanki]: I'm Tsanki Lekgoatla, I was detained in 1976 December and was detained for my political activities.

[Joyce]: I'm Joyce Dipale

[Tiego]: I'm Tiego Masinga, I was detained in 1976 on 31 December. I didn't stay for too long, as I was charged the following year and re-detained again in 1978 where I was acquitted for my trial.

Q: How old were you when you came in here?

A: [Joyce]: '76?

[Tiego]: She was in her twenties.

Q: And, what was your political involvement at the time?

A: [Joyce]: '76?

[Tiego]: She was involved in youth movement with organizations such as Youth Alive, which was based in Dube and SASM, which were the South African Student Movement and the ANC underground.

Q: Do you remember what happened on the day that they came to take you to John Vorster Square?

A: [Joyce]: I was taken from Diepkloof and then to John Vorster Square.

[Tiego]: Probably to Protea Police Station then to John Vorster Square.

Q: Can you describe how you were brought here?

A: [Joyce]: From the meeting that we were having in Diepkloof, we were arrested at about eleven at night and were all brought here as a group. John Vorster Square

[Tiego]: The leadership of the Student Movement was having a meeting when they arrested them, which led to the trial of the SSRC in 1977.

Q: When they brought you at John Vorster, did they take you straight to interrogation?

A: [Joyce]: We were all put in our own different cells and for about 30-days it was just torture. Well, this is what I experienced, but I'm sure we were all going through the same thing.

Q: When they took you to interrogation where did they take you?

A: [Joyce]: It was in one of the top floors and they would be about four or five of them as policemen interrogating and torturing you, that is, my head was covered and I was electrocuted.

[Tsanki]: It was also on a daily basis and the police generally would use all different methods of torture.

Q: Did they make you write statements or anything like that?

A: [Joyce]: Probably they did, but what I still can't get over is why torture had to be the first solution to all of this. Surely, we could have held successful talks. One of those saddest things, actually.

[Tiego]: The question was about the statement, Joyce.

[Joyce]: Probably...you know, I'm angry, because all sorts of things were done to torture us, rape even.

Q: Are you okay?

A: [Joyce]: I'm fine. You know, one day I'd like to document what happened here in John Vorster. But why did we all have to suffer this much. I mean; my brother, my husband, Tsanki, Baby...what had we done? What happened to my brother? Who deserves to be hanged? I had already written half a book and then one day whilst I was at O.R.Tambo I was hit by a stroke. If I hadn't been hit by this stroke, I would truly have loved to write a book. Maybe, one day my dream will come true. I was tortured, my brother died terribly and I may never realize my dream of writing a book, but I feel like God has again tortured me personally. And, you know what, it hurts...it feels like a double dagger in my heart. "God, I don't understand why I have had to go through all this...why can't I read and write?" But you know what; on the other hand I am very hopeful that things will get better. If God could restore Job's health, so will I be. I may have been tortured, lost my brother, but my health? I want God to restore my health completely.

[Tsanki]: Obviously, you could hear how she expresses herself, that is, like most detainees when they have to explain themselves with regards to what they have undergone. The interrogation that took place in this institution was terrible and we would be called in at different times. So, you would think that somebody is on the 9<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> floor, that is, only to find out when they come back that they were actually outside this building. Like for instance, in my case they took us from our cells in the middle of the night and then drove us to the Avalon graveyard and that's where they would interrogate us. And, if you were not able to talk they used all sorts of extreme methods just to scare and also to show that they could easily do anything with you. And, this was definitely painful.

Q: What does John Vorster Square represent to you as a family?

A: [Tsanki]: As a tool of the head of state, it was remote to us; it represented a different class altogether, since we had no say in it. For us, it represented the people who were fighting for injustice in this country.

[Joyce]: Exactly...

[Tsanki]: I mean, we've got people that died in this place.

[Joyce]: My brother for example.

Q: This is Moabi?

A: [Joyce]: Lilian Ngoyi...and most of us women were raped, as well. You know, all of this just makes me angry sometimes...Tiego?

Q: How was John Vorster Square different compared to all the other prisons?

A: [Tsanki]: John Vorster Square was just always different, because of how they treated and murdered people, even non-political prisoners were subjected to it. So, it represented white supremacy.

Q: When you came out of detention what kind of effect did it have on you?

A: [Tiego]: I could start with explaining what John Vorster represented. It represented torture and death, but as an activist when you go to prison you know what to expect, so you process this, before you even get here. For example, I was detained here and even in exile I was locked up in Botswana and Mozambique, but always expected to happen bad as it. Having been detained can either strengthens you or 'kills' you, for example, other people came out mentally disturbed and chronically ill. And, my experience is different from Joyce's, because I was always determined. But, as said what's important is psychological preparation and in my case I was even prepared to die, so when I came out I knew I had made it. I had survived.]

[Joyce]: But Tiego, my anger comes not from the arrest and torture. I'm angry about my personal circumstances...can you imagine losing your ability to speak, read and write.

Q: Can you put us in the picture of what happened in Botswana?

A: [Tsanki]: I think my brother is the best person to respond on this one, as he was also there at that time.

[Tiego]: Yes, there was a raid in Botswana where Joyce and a group of women were staying, which normal procedure after the state was declared war to so-called terrorists in the neighboring states. I think that the night Joyce was shot they had a three-prong attack on Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Some people were assassinated during the same period in Johannesburg and Zimbabwe, respectively. There was this policy from the government to hunt down anyone suspected to be a terrorist and Joyce was one of them. It's actually quite a complicated matter, because we don't really know what happened. At one point he was coming to visit us in Botswana, and there's a rumor that he was kidnapped at the border. The only thing I know is that he was cruelly murdered from the South African and Botswana borders, and then only brought here when he was already dead. And, also I don't want Joyce to know what happened, even though she has also been bugging me for sometime as well, but I don't believe that it will do any good. And, I fear that knowing the truth might push us into a vengeful state, so I'd rather we don't go deeper into that. Another thing is that the Death Squad that Joe Mamasela belonged to, the Askaris, was well trained and fought in Namibia, as well. And, Ernest is not the only one who was killed, but a lot of young people died in this country. Also, his story is well known,

so I'd rather not go into much detail, but he definitely didn't die a reasonable death, because many things probably happened to him before he was killed.

Q: So, in the end his body was found, here?

A: [Joyce]: Yes, here at John Vorster.

[Tiego]: Well, even that was a bit complex, because our parents did not want to get involved, and the worst part was they didn't even want to bury him.

[Joyce]: I think my parents were angry.

[Tiego]: It took a lot for them to eventually agree to the burial, but still they didn't even want to look at the body and it really isn't a nice story.

Q: What do you think of John Vorster today? The name has changed, but the building's still the same...do you think it's possible to separate what happened then to what it is now?

A: [Tiego]: If, I may take just a different approach here, firstly I don't like the idea of a prison and also the South African police are no different from the past.

[Joyce]: I would say it's 50/50.

[Tiego]: If, I was a governor, I wouldn't allow prison building, because we have a lot of social and economic problems. I feel more like the poor live in prisons. So, a building like this for me, I would say, for example, turns it into a museum or a school.

[Tsanki]: Concurring with him, my addition is that we grew up in a police state country and it seems to continue to be one. That is, most policemen today still have that 'harassment' mentality and attitude, for example a person with a minor case, but you will see the policemen over-exaggerating the issue. For me, it doesn't matter what they call the place, but if certain things remain the same my attitude won't change. I was arrested for 30-days in this place together with Paul Langa and what I had to go through with the police exchanging their interrogations between myself and Paul; it's hard for me to ever wish to come back to this place. A prison's just not a healthy place for people to live in and more so, if you know that you were fighting for a just cause.

[Joyce]: Exactly.

[Tsanki]: All we wanted was equality.

