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TM: Tshepo Moloji

RM: Marakalala

Interview with Rosina Marakalala

TM: Today is the 21 February 2011. It's Tshepo Moloji and I'm with ... Is it Marakalla?

RM: It's Rosina Marakalala

TM: With nkhono (grandma) Rosina Marakala at Umfuyaneni

RM: 346

TM: 346 Umfuyaneni section in Thembisa. Eh, let me take this time and thank you for giving me this opportunity to come and talk to you about the history of Thembisa. To start off maybe you can introduce yourself and tell us your full names and where you were born.

RM: I'm Rosina Makgomu Marakalala, double I l a. I was born in Pietersburg on the 17th September, 19 nineteen eighty three.

TM: Where in Pietersburg?

RM: At Mapila

TM: Who were you living with when you were growing up?

RM: I was living with my mother, father, and my brothers

TM: How many brothers did you have?

RM: The first born ... They've all passed on now. There was the first born. The second one died while he was still young. And then it was me. And then the other one who is dead. Then the last born is the one who is alive; the one that I'm going to see now in Pietersburg.

TM: Oh! So there were five of you?

RM: Yes

TM: And what were the names of your parents?

RM: My father was Zebulon

TM: And your mother's name?

RM: Tryphina Makena

TM: At home what were their occupation, your dad and your mom?

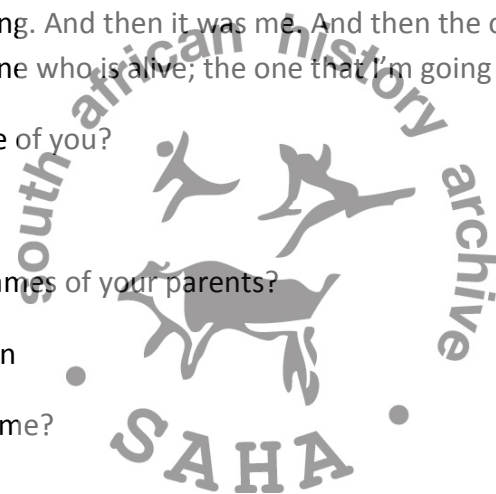
RM: They were both teachers

TM: Wow! Okay. If you could explain to us: as children who were growing up having parents who were teachers how was life?

RM: It was alright, because they were teachers. But they were farmers for the Boers, because they were from Middleburg. But now the Anglican Church ... Those people with certain years living there wherever they go they knew that they were not from there but originally they were from Middleburg location.

TM: So when they left Middleburg what was the reason or was it because of work?

RM: It was because of work, and my dad was a pastor, yes. Because he was a pastor ... He was an Anglican [Church] pastor. And during that time the people who were chased away by



the Boers were staying at his place and they were the ones who started the Middleburg location.

TM: Oh! They arrested him that time saying...

RM: Yes, because he was supposed to get horses from ... It's a long time

TM: When you were sitting with him did he talk about these kinds of things?

RM: Yes, he was talking about them. He was the kind of a person who was educated and loved the ... He didn't like the Boers.

TM: Your dad?

RM: Yes

TM: What did he say about them?

RM: He didn't like the way they were oppressing us

TM: How were they oppressing you?

RM: During that time they would come here in the rural areas and take cows from the people

TM: Mmm ... So he had his cows for how long? Or are they still alive?

RM: They are not there anymore, and it's all because of the kids because when they were growing up ... He placed us in separated places, so we don't really know what happened to them. And there was never a follow up that was made, you see.

TM: Okay. Then where do you start attending school?

RM: I started there at Mapila, at Diseseng, Pietersburg. It was an Anglican [Church] school. I attended there 'till Standard 9 - it was Junior Certificate (JC)¹. From there I quit.

TM: And after you quit school what did you do?

RM: When I quit I already had kids.

TM: Okay. Were you still at home?

RM: Yes, while I was there. I was working but not as a domestic worker. But I was doing domestic work, sewing and married [already].

TM: Oh?

¹ Actually Junior Certificate it was Standard 8

RM: But my marriage didn't last with this man, because he was abusing me

TM: When you started working - after guidance at Anglican – where did you move to?

RM: I was staying at home and I had a kid

TM: Oh, you were at home. So you started sewing while you were at home?

RM: I was still at home ... No, I was here [Thembisa]. I left the work that I was doing and worked from home here in Thembisa. People would bring their clothes

TM: Clothes?

RM: Yes, children's clothes

TM: Wow! Okay. Did you study to do that or...

RM: My mother was a teacher. But she learnt Domestic Science before she did teaching. And at school they were teaching sewing

TM: So when did you come here [Johannesburg]?

RM: I came here in 1956.

TM: Whereabouts did live when you arrived here?

RM: We arrived in town, because my husband was working here, in the factories. But when I arrived here... [Inaudible]

TM: What kind of transport did you use when you came here?

RM: We used train

TM: How long did it take you to arrive here?

RM: It came at night. We were using *khutshukhutshu* (coal train)

TM: Oh! You were using Khutshukhutshu. When you arrived whereabouts did you go to? Where was your husband working?

RM: He was working in Germiston, at Primrose

TM: Oh. So you stayed with him on your arrival?

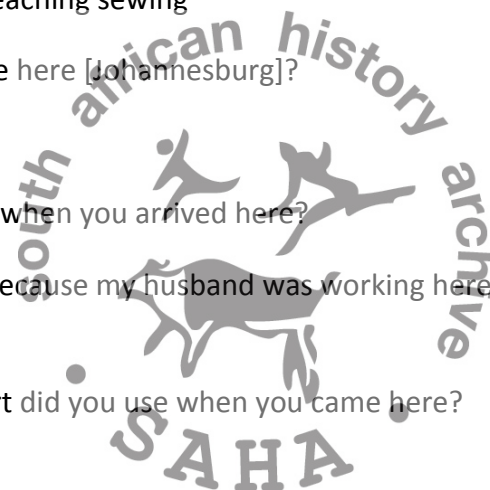
RM: Yes, there in a church, because it was not far from his work.

TM: When you arrived here ... Had you ever been here or was it your first time?

RM: It was my first time

TM: How did you find Johannesburg?

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RM: Initially it was dangerous, because during that time you couldn't go around town at 9 in the evening.

TM: Oh, why was that?

RM: They refused you to do so. You had to be in-doors, because before this thing ... You were not allowed to loiter around the streets at 9 in town.

TM: How ... Did they chase you away?

RM: It was the law. The police would arrest you.

TM: I didn't know that. When you arrived at Primrose where were you staying?

RM: I was living in the backyard. And from there I went to Edenvale. But I didn't stay for a long time.

TM: Still at Edenvale - you were living in ...

RM: In the township. It was called Sebenza. It was once Dindela, yes. And they moved us from there. Even there we were renting, and it were shacks and we were renting there. And then they moved us from there and brought us here in Thembisa. And when we got here it was also shacks, but then they built us four roomed houses.

TM: Oh, at Dindela when you moved

RM: We were moved by the Boers with trucks.

TM: But you were renting the place?

RM: Yes, we rented the place. Everyone that was there they would take you ... Eish, it was hard.

TM: How long did you stay at Dindela?

RM: I stayed for about two years.

TM: Two years. So what were you doing while you were living at Dindela?

RM: I was working

TM: Life in Dindela. If you could explain it, how was it?

RM: It was painful, because sometimes in the street you would see streams. It was the bucket system. The toilets that we had were bucket system. When they came to take them they would just empty them there in front ... Life was not good. And the Boers were harassing us looking for pomets (permits) at night and why didn't you have it.

TM: Oh! They would enter in your home?

RM: Yes, saying pass! At that time you were not supposed ... As a person from Pietersburg you were not supposed to come and work here in Gauteng. Just like here in Elandsfontein, when you were working you would see a railway line. They (police) would be there and you wouldn't come and work here.

TM: Oh! You were supposed to work on the other side?

RM: Yes, work on the other side. Even people in Pretoria worked this side. Sometimes they were not supposed to. As a woman you were not supposed to go and look for work. You know life was painful.

TM: So, as people from Dindela were you able to sit and talk about these issues?

RM: No, you wouldn't talk. Some did talk but it was not a normal thing. But you would hear about them in places like Soweto. You would hear about such things.

TM: When they were moving you from Dindela and bringing you here in Thembisa, if you remember what did they do when they settled you here you?

RM: When I got in the van bringing me here ... Taxis were very few. I stayed at Kopanong. And then I came to live here at Umfuyaneni in '73 after my husband and I divorced.

TM: In seventy three?

RM: Yes

TM: When they were removing you from Dindela what did they say when they came to your place, because you were renting the place?

RM: The way things were I didn't know what to say, because there were men handling us and telling you that you had to move to Thembisa, and then they removed some [people]. I think they took them to Katlehong, and it was at night.

TM: Oh, they moved you at night?

RM: Yes. And they were writing your details down and place you there. Sometimes you'd find that when you arrived in a place there were no shacks. You had to find zincs to build. And even the toilet you were using zincs to build it.

TM: When they brought you here where did they place you - was it in Kopanong?

RM: Yes, Kopanong

TM: When they brought you here did they say anything?

RM: They were placing you in a queue until you get a number

TM: Oh, they were giving you numbers?

RM: Yes. We were registering for the stands. You'd stand there and they would throw your belongings down from the trucks. And others would arrive to build shacks for you

TM: How big were the shacks?

RM: It was the same size as this room. They were very small

TM: How ... During this time it's you, your husband, and who else?

RM: The kids

TM: How many were you in that shack?

RM: How many were we? Because some (kids) were in the rural area, so it was Kgomotso and ... There were three of us. We stayed here until they built these houses

TM: When did they build them?

RM: I don't remember but it was in the ... We left Dindela in '61, if I'm correct

TM: And during that time at Kopanong - when you were living there - how did they allocate you places? Was it according to different ethnic groups?

RM: Yes, there was that separation. They were saying that the Zulus in their place and the Sothos and Tsongas were allocated their place.

TM: Now how was life?

RM: You know, as the time went on you get used to it, because you were not worried about other people. So you get used to it.

TM: So, these raids were they still carried out, the police coming for the pomets and all those other things?

RM: They did come for the pomets

TM: How did that thing make you feel?

RM: Hey, it was painful. But because we were still young so we were living.

TM: But life moved on?

RM: Yes, life moved on. But the shops were far. Those who came first were at Oakmoor, so you would go buy things there.

TM: Oh, the shops were at Oakmoor?

RM: Yes, they were far

TM: What are you travelling with now?

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RM: We were walking because there were no taxis

TM: whose shops were they?

RM: They were...it that time when the clever ones built shops but they were belonging to the whites so they were partnering with them.

TM: So in that time who were the people who owned these shops?

RM: It was Thabethe and Tata but I dont know their first names

TM: Ohh...they owned these shops?

RM: Yes

TM: So here at Kopanong there were no shops?

RM: Yes there were no shops

TM: So what did you do on weekends?

RM: On weekends there is church... [Inaudible] we would go as woman to Rome...sometimes we would go to Roma because Anglican was a bit far, so we couldn't go because of long distance.

TM: So church was the main activity here?

RM: Yes it was

TM: So did you have woman society?

RM: No it was there...it was there

TM: So in fifty six when you got to Primrose to the sixties before they removed you from Dindela, it was the time of the ANC...

RM: Yes the underground things, there were no people who...buy we knew that it was there we have already heard.

TM: Ohh...so you already heard about it?

RM: Yes

TM: So if you still remember when did you hear about it?

RM: I heard about it while I was still at home, as my dad was talking about it

TM: He was talking about it that it was going to change in some years; he was a story teller so he was telling us that there are people playing soccer in other countries, he was a person

who was book well he loved to read because even his news papers he was buying them from...like the Garden news paper he was ordered them from Cape Town

TM: So it was arriving straight to him

RM: Yes in the post box

TM: So as the years passed they are building houses for you in Tembisa, are there any changes that you see?

RM: In that time?

TM: Yes

RM: They were changing them because we were alive that's what they saw and they even built schools, and they gave a train that ended in Tembisa it was from Kaalfontein coming here to Tembisa and people were using it to go to town and those who were going to work were taking a train from Pretoria to Johannesburg and they would wait for it at Oargmoor they took that trail and after a while it ended in Leralla.

TM: So as years passed by from sixty one to...what are you living out of, were you still sewing?

RM: I was sewing but not that much I was just sewing.

TM: When they were building houses they belonged to the Municipal?

RM: Yes the four roomed houses.

TM: Were you paying for the services?

RM: Yes but after a long period of time we were just living without paying a cent.

TM: Ohh...you were just staying there without paying a cent?

RM: Yes

TM: So when did you become involved in the township politics?

RM: I started working in this other firm I started working in...I think it was in sixty eight at Elandsfontein they were looking for people to work in the engineering department then I started working there and that's where we talked about politics until underground until seventy three when I moved to other firm and then I worked at 3M company until I retired in nine tee six. So the way the unions were so fast I dont remember what was it I think it was SACAWU so we launched COSATU at Hunters Field we choose that venue and I was there when they launched it even in the train we would protest there and the teachers were also there getting in and out but it was very bad.

TM: Let's talk about the issue when you started working at Elandsfontein, what company was it?

RM: It was Universal Company

TM: Universal Company?

RM: Yes.

TM: How did you get the job there?

RM: We were walking around looking for job and we were walking to Elandsfontein because you will go to a certain place as a group and get in a firm to look for job or we would sit in the gate and when they want people they come to you and take from group just like that.

TM: So you got it from there?

RM: Yes

TM: So how the working conditions at Universal were when you started working and what led you to join the union?

RM: Even the unions were underground because they were not allowed but the work issue...because we were making the window handles, spoons and compartments you see but the working conditions were not good.

TM: And money?

RM: Ahhh...we were getting forty Rand I think monthly.

TM: Monthly?

RM: In a week, yes I think it was forty Rand because we... [Inaudible]

TM: When you say it was underground, how can you explain that?

RM: When you were sitting during lunch time you would talk about them on how the Boers are oppressing you and all the other stuff you see.

TM: And who was organising you that time?

RM: We would organise ourselves as we were working but us the workers with no shop Stuart and so on, we had to hide it because if they can find out...you know and that time I was working at 3M.

TM: 3M ohh...right so in seventy three when you started working at 3M

RM: Yes

TM: Okay and now you are organising?

RM: Yes we are organising.

TM: So how are they organising you?

RM: Meaning that there were meetings yes and they would choose shop Stuart

TM: Ohh...that time they were allowing you?

RM: Yes they were.

TM: Do you still remember who your shop Stuart was?

RM: It was this person who was he...and he's an NP and he lives at Germiston and works at Boksburg who was he...how his name is refusing me...I will remember it and I will tell you.

TM: We will come back to it, and how did it come about that you end up being a member of SACAWU?

RM: You were joining then you become a member and then you contribute monthly.

TM: Even there the working conditions were not okay?

RM: They were not okay because we were fighting for money and sometimes we had no working suite and we would come with our own clothes until they came and gave us gloves and the working suite the department of sand paper.

TM: What was it doing there?

RM: We were...I was working as a cutter cutting papers...because sand paper is different there is medium, coarse and fine yes, you know sand paper right.

TM: Yes I know sand paper.

RM: Yes it was all kind even the belt for the mines machine, discs and the steel wool we are using to wash pot yes.

TM: So what did you go to work?

RM: We were working from eight.

TM: And knock off at what time?

RM: We were knocking off at four.

TM: And then in the evening who was looking after the kids?

RM: Kids...kids I took them home because they were clever now and attending school.

TM: Were you still at Kopanong?

RM: No when I started working at 3M I was already here.

TM: At Umfuyaneni?

RM: Yes.

TM: Ohh...right

RM: I came here in seventy three.

TM: So how do you get the house?

RM: House...we were applying in the Municipality; we were applying there until they...

TM: But now didn't they want to know why you were moving from Kopanong?

RM: It was one thing Tembisa that place so I told them and it was according to the law.

TM: So when you got here, you were...

RM: I was renting in a four roomed house they were offering you one room.

TM: Inside the four roomed house?

RM: Yes

TM: Is there a person that you are renting from?

RM: People from the rural area say this in working area and home in the rural area maybe you are renting the other room.

TM: Some one is renting the other room?

RM: Yes and some one is renting the dining room, it was a very difficult life.

TM: So how many were you in one house?

RM: Maybe you are two.

TM: How.

RM: Yes it was painful.

TM: And then how was life because you dont know each other?

RM: You are going to know each other while you are living there because now you are sharing a house.

TM: Ohh...so when you were renting how much were you paying?

RM: I dont remember how much we were paying because it was a long time ago.

TM: Okay so you stayed there for...

RM: When you were renting they were evacuating you when your children were misbehaving and you would look for another place to live until I got this one in seventy three.

TM: Which racial group stayed here in Umfuyaneni?

RM: The Pedi's.

TM: Ohh...so finally you join SACAWU.

RM: Yes I joined SACAWU under Mashinini

TM: Ohh...Emma Mashinini?

RM: Yes she was the one who was leading us and the one who was our Shop Stuart is Amon Mosala

TM: Ohh...Amon Mosala, Mosala or Mosana?

RM: Mosana

TM: Ohh...Mosana

RM: He is a NP but he doesn't live in Tembisa I dont know where he lives now, he was very active I think he was Jonah...Joseph right hand man.

TM: Okay so you...SACAWU did it call strikes while you were at 3M?

RM: Yes because the shop Stuart would call them.

TM: You would strike?

RM: Yes

TM: Were you not afraid that you are going to loose your jobs?

RM: It was a Union there is no such thing that we are going to loose our jobs even the rats that didn't want to strike.

TM: And then in the township in Tembisa the conditions are there things that were improving what is really happening when you were living here?

RM: There were Councillors so our kids were doing...you would find that they were holding meetings but most of the time they would meet here.

TM: Here at home?

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RM: Yes even the councillors were selected by these kids Pet Thwala and so on I would say that it was very strong here in the west, even the vans were coming here and the Boers arresting them and all these things they one arrested my kid and that was the time I went over seas after the State of Emergency because the time of the State of Emergency it was the time they were burying Konile.

TM: Ohh...Mathew Konile

RM: Yes when they came back...they started it at twelve o'clock mid night and they knew that when they comeback from there they must come back before twelve and they arrested them on their way back.

TM: During that time...you are living here at Umfuyaneni and you are working at 3M so here in Umfuyaneni you own a four roomed now?

RM: Yes it was a four roomed house.

TM: Yes and how many children do you have no?

RM: My children, the last born got a job while I was still at 3M.

TM: Who are the others; let's start from the first born.

RM: The first born, you want names?

TM: Yes

RM: First born was Robert and he has passed on now and the one after him is Oupa he is still alive and lives at Soweto the third born who also passed on he is the one that died at Dindela.

TM: Who was he?

RM: He was Alias and the other one who is Malume, Malume they were the first one to put scrap in the railway, they were the first people to put scrap on the rail way line so that the train cannot pass and they were arrested twelve of them they used to call them the Great Twelve's because they were still young and under age and Malume was a ring leader and the kid from the opposite and others...the other boy is Mr. Pat child at Lekaneng and they were twelve. We were attending court and they were arrested and putted in a hippo.

TM: And after Malume who was next?

RM: It was and is still alive and it's Patrick who is at Mpumalanga he is a SAPS and then there is Debra she was the one who was carrying the time and after Debra it the one here at home Tryphina and after her is Elsie who is at Parliament and then Germina who is the last born she is also there.

TM: So it was Malume, Elsie and Debra who were involved?

RM: Yes

TM: So how are they becoming involved, are they in high school let's start there?

RM: They were attending here at Tembisa, they attended here in Tembisa because they were the youth and after seventy six they became worse.

TM: But did you know that they were involved in politics or it came as a surprise to you?

RM: It was...because I was also involved heading meetings at Mkhathini and at night you will find us wearing white dust coat and we would be carrying Bibles and when we get there...when the police come we would open our Bibles and when they live we start again.

TM: What were those meeting for?

RM: ANC meetings.

TM: It was you and who that time?

RM: There were so many of us and mainly woman.

TM: Are the some that you still remember?

RM: The ones that I remember are...some have passed on the other one lives at Birchleigh who is Mme Radebe who was living here at Ndulwini and the other one is Thami Myele's mother.

TM: Ohh...Myele

RM: Yes

TM: Ohh...so it were those woman's?

RM: Yes and Thami Myele's mother is still alive, haven't you heard about her?

TM: I have heard.

RM: Yes his child died

TM: So you as the woman who was bringing you together?

RM: We were bringing our selves together because we would meet in meeting and say that we will meet later.

TM: What are you talking about in these meetings?

RM: We are talking about politics.

TM: What are you saying?

RM: (Laughs) I dont remember we were starting the organisation...in that time we were still FETRO we formed it was FETRO...

TM: Yes it was FETRO, so who came with an idea to wear white clothes when going to meetings at night?

RM: You know as people you discuss and you would come with difference ideas, even in that time when the police started to kill people when we came back from launching COSATU because now they were shooting people and they shoot this guy who was staying at...I dont remember his name but he was living at Motheoung that's where they started and then they went to the top and they were going around shooting people and they took some of the people to the mutuary in Kempton Park the police station was still there at Kempton Park they putted them there and when we would be going to work other women who were not working would go there to look for their children so that they could be buried but the police would refuse it was just a mess, so now even the youth were taking Patco buses forcing to go there and if they didn't know you then they were not burying you in the train people would be protesting and the Boers would come and they will be going with Tata because we were afraid of him it was hard.

TM: How...and the issue of the train involving Malume, why were they blocking it?

RM: Because we were fighting so the Boers were chasing them and then they arrested them all twelve of them and then we started to go to courts and they were not cooperating because they were asking the Magistrate what were they wearing and that did he see them and I said to my self we are suffering.

TM: So it was the first time he was arrested?

RM: Yes it was the first time, they were from the soccer practice and then they got them there.

TM: So how did their case end?

RM: They were always reminding it and at last they said that they are under age and then they realised them to a juvenile prison that was somewhere in Benoni.

TM: Where were they attending their case?

RM: At Kempton Park

TM: Ohh...it took time?

RM: Yes it took time and we were working while we were going there.

TM: To see them?

RM: No at work.

TM: Ohh...at work and what did they say at work?

RM: They didn't refuse because they were going to deduct money.

TM: Eish and then the time Debra and Elsie...

RM: They were there because Elsie was still young, they were there and they were busy holding meetings.

TM: Here at home?

RM: By the time I get back from work I would find lot people carrying pamphlets written Mandela.

TM: Here at home?

RM: They were holding their meetings here.

TM: And were they kept their pamphlets?

RM: No I'm saying that they were wearing shirts and they kept them under the pilots so that the police cannot see them and sometimes you would find that they've putted them in the bedroom under the bed but when I wake up there is nothing they went there to tell others that I have gone to work and they would take these buckets because they were taking flour and mixing it with water and use it to paste the pamphlets to the wall and stopping people from going to work.

TM: And the people who were working how were they taking this?

RM: Eish they were calling us politicians calling us the communist and we didn't care.

TM: You didn't care?

RM: Yes because it was the late Mama Glessa there were lot of us.

TM: You said that when the state of emergency started then they arrested them.

RM: I was still involved in SWISA and I was looking for Debra and not knowing were she is because I was searching even in the police stations and she stayed for a long time until they realised her, because they were...these bakeries they were taking everything from there when they came here Debra was the first one they took.

TM: The police?

RM: Yes and they putted sacks on her and they took her because they wanted to know and she once left and they got her while she was at Swaziland.

Tm: She was running away?

RM: Yes.

TM: But that time were you able to sit down and talked about what was happening?

RM: With whom?

TM: With your children.

RM: You couldn't.

TM: There was no time?

RM: Yes there was no time.

TM: You talked about the state of emergency the time you went overseas.

RM: I was arrested because Sun City...you see Sun City?

TM: Yes I see it.

RM: I was going there to visit and some times during the visit...and sometimes you would get the visit letter at Springs in the soldier's compound

TM: So you were not going straight to Sun City?

RM: No you were supposed to get a letter and I got it at...

TM: And what did the letter said?

RM: It said that I was allowed to go there and see a person and when I went there for the first time I stayed at [inaudible] because there were no taxis if you were the only one you were supposed to pay for the empty seats to were you dont know and when I got there it was the police woman who were there and when I was leaving they told me that there are taxis in the coloured location and I went there and when I got back...they were working at court house SAC

Tm: Ohh...SCC

RM: Dont you know Eric Tlabamatla?

TM: No.

RM: They were working there the pastors and David the one who was killed and he was living you see when you go towards Jeppe David Webster.

TM: Webster?

RM: Yes he was the one who was giving us checks, twenty Rands when we got back.

TM: Have you left 3M already?

RM: I was still at 3M.

TM: So what are you doing there?

RM: Where?

TM: At Methodist what are you doing?

RM: Methodist in on Saturday because I passed there and coming back home I would tell them at work.

TM: Ohh...you were giving them a feed back?

RM: Yes.

TM: So when you went there for a visit what are you talking about what is she saying?

RM: The police is next to you we didn't stay for a long time sometimes you wouldn't see her because you brought her clothes because sometimes I'm sitting there sister Benet I bought her body suite I asked them that why are you not writing her and I asked why these kind of clothes they said there is a garden and sometimes when you take her something she doesn't get it and when you ask they dont know were it ended because that time they arrested Angie Mothekga and Mme Ngori.

TM: Ohh...Mokonyane?

RM: Yes

TM: And the issue of you going overseas how did it come about?

RM: Because I attending meetings at Methodist central Methodist and I met other comrades from other townships and they did...the other member came here from Sweden with the group of woman and they said that they want to choose five people so that they can explain this thing to you and they did their selection and I was amongst those people, because here at Tembisa there was no one so I tried to refuse and then I thought why because it was exile...then I though why because even Debra is arrested and she is telling me that I must be brave and then she was writing in the toilet paper and then rolled it when I got there even Gill was giving me these toilet papers.

TM: Do you still have that toilet paper?

RM: What?

TM: That toilet paper?

RM: No I left it there as I'm telling you that there was a booklet.

TM: So how does she give it to you?

RM: There were some girls who were arrested so when they come out they come with their clothes that they were wearing and you would find that she putted it in the pocket.

TM: So when you left here you were five, it was you and who else?

RM: It was me I forgot the name but will give it to you when I remembered it, it was me, Ruth from Port Elizabeth, Ivy and this Sotho woman from SACS there were two Pedi's and three Sotho's.

TM: You left here and went where

RM: We are going to Sweden.

TM: So when you got there...

RM: When we arrived...we left here and when we arrived there we took a cab and when we arrived at Amsterdam we changed and we took a flight to Sweden and we arrived there. When we arrived they were waiting for us because was the group of woman the ones we were under, they were waiting for us because they've given us a programme they were waiting for us and when we left we went to the stock to do an interview.

TM: Who is interviewing you now, these women?

RM: Yes.

TM: What are they asking?

RM: They were asking how our trip was and we went to...were the minister is staying yes we went there to have lunch and from there...we were attending meetings we were not in one place until the end of three weeks.

TM: Ohh...

RM: We were changing places they would tell us that there is an interview so we are going and sometimes we go to the hotel or sometimes in homes when we arrive they would be waiting for us.

TM: So what are you telling these people when you arrive there?

RM: We were telling them about the life that we were living here, telling them that our children are in prison and others in exile since she left it was about the life that we were living until we heard that Oliver Thambo was at the stock on the first of May nineteen eighty seven and then they arranged at... [Inaudible] it was the time we were writing affidavit and he came to the meeting and went with us to our place and now we went to many places, during that day they were arranging us and we left with the others the other group of

women and they were taking us to that place it was heaven and they were saying that blacks were not allowed in there so everybody knew that there were there were comrades there and after a while until they took us here and we meet other Basotho's I still remember were we at everything was pink and we were there and I cried that day I cried and I couldn't stop my self.

TM: Who was comforting you now?

RM: There was no one but they asked what was wrong, so I cried until I cooled down and explained everything.

TM: What does he say, if you remember what did he say when he started?

RM: He greeted us and asked us where are we from and so on and we explained to him I told him that some of my kids are gone and he took some to his office but I dont know their names and then he was taking our names even the other ones were explaining their selves and he said when you get home...because we were at Kgotso house and then I went there the second week and you would know that your kids are alive and they are alright and now he knew my brother because he was working at Kempton Park and everything and now he started to tell us the history of Tembisa, they called these the slides or what they did that for us and I asked that how do you know were it is and he said there is no place where there is no ANC even the Dutch have ANC after just immediately after without you knowing they come out of their meeting in the parliament and we knew everything and what they are talking about, we would walk out of there and have lunch with him because he was supposed to go to the rally of...and we told him that we are going where you are going and then they escorted us to that place and it was full of ANC Whites, school kids, flags you were going to cry but if you get here you would never get even a piece of ANC. When we got back home it was the time of...I even have a special buy now is torn I am going to look for it they gave all those things programmes and when he came I saw...it was like the flags were up ANC you would hear ANC with the votes at first it was this other dude and then he talked next, when we travelled we travelled with these car what do they call them?

TM: Limacine?

RM: Yes and they treated us well you know we were living and I said I wish I didn't have kids I wouldn't go back to South Africa.

TM: (Laughs) so at work did you ask?

RM: I took my things there and told them that we are going to church but they knew.

TM: After three weeks you came back?

RM: Yes on the fifteen of May.

TM: And when you got here?

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RM: No we are still travelling; we are still going to travel after that we are still going from Sweden and we are going to West Germany first no...East Germany it's the place of Botha it made West and East and we went there and we went to Berlin and when we arrived there they were waiting for us and these are the pastors who were deported from here and they were arrested for reading a news paper which was Sun...After it was Sunday Times so at first it was...these pastors were keeping children who were comrades because they were deporting them and they were sending them to highways.

TM: How

RM: Yes and they were the ones who were waiting for us so that we can cross and when we went there their life style was not good you were deciding weather you go East or West if you have a kid there you cant go there right then the day passed until we landed and when we got there they were waiting for us along with Masepherephere and the others and they were taking us at...you the hotel there the toilet paper even the news paper it's much better, the toilet were licking there was nothing to decorate the hall the communist the wall...it was that time of...and they took us to the top...we attended lots of meetings.

TM: Ohh...you were attending meetings there?

RM: Everyday it was a meeting

TM: So you were telling them what was happening here in South Africa?

RM: Yes and they were telling us how are things on their side and were talking about these kind of things, we were going and it was far were we were going maybe they were putting us in a flight, bus or train to there but as we were travelling we meet up with the others who were from Natal.

TM: Ohh...

RM: Taking us to...the cars there the Volkswagen they were making a nasty noise we were going to the ANC camps and when we arrived there...they opened the gates there and when we arrived to the ANC camps we stayed and they went down stairs and from there they came to see us Yoh...it was very scary.

TM: Where they were living?

RM: Yes the ANC base I mean where they are staying the camp eish there are some who went there in seventy six and they were showing us their place showing us things it was scary and then we came back and went to sleep in this other place at Born it was mothers day ten May they did it in this other place and there were pastors and then the next day we went back to the west and we left the pastors from West Germany when we went to East Germany and when we went back there we made the very same line and the wall.

TM: The pastors are they from South Africa?

RM: These pastors they were here in South Africa but they are Berlins because the church was...the church was brought down by Hitler some were broken and there bell was ringing and they were putting flowers in the door, they were telling us and the women who were not able to...they opened up tunnels were no one can see they were telling us their stories and we were going from one place to the other and they were telling us their stories they were using these places the church could be like from here to there.

TM: It's big?

RM: Yes they are big and Hitler was targeting churches.

TM: So for how long have you stayed there?

RM: Where?

TM: At Mussah.

RM: About three weeks.

TM: So when you come back here, where do you arrive at?

RM: When we came back...I think we went to the other place because they were showing us lots of places because the place that we were going to, to meet up with other comrades and there were lot of them and they were staying there at top eish! And all these things and from there we went to this church and the Bishop of that church was taken here in South Africa and they showed us that place and when you go there it's the sea there was this huge bridge and when we were suppose to pass the sea opens up and after we have crossed the sea closed up eish! After that they took us to...because some of them they were in the Island some where there and there was an office there I think it was Amsterdam then we came out of there. The things that they were suppose to give us they couldn't because they were going to arrest us.

TM: So you arrived there at Oliver Thambo Airport?

RM: Yes at Oliver Thambo we arrived there and they picked us up and my brother picked me up and we came here at home.

TM: So the comrades this side did they knew that you went to...

RM: Some of them because we were chosen from the base.

TM: So now you are going there to report?

RM: Yes.

TM: Were you were meeting and what did they say?

RM: It was not a meeting there it was just to report.

TM: Ohh...so are you able to talk to Elsie in exile?

RM: No some times you go there and you find card and it was brought by the underground.

TM: Ohh...So at the house you went...

RM: Yes I did go; when I got there I got the message that she was alright and she said she went to Cape Town.

TM: Alright...so now is the struggle still going on?

RM: Yes and then after that as I was sitting here at home from work the police came and they wanted a passport and they found it and they said Jesus you are the communist and you are from your offices.

TM: Ohh...they found it?

RM: Yes passport they wanted it and they saw that it was from Berlin and it was Desmond Tutu and they told us that and the woman were with us

TM: Is there someone who told them?

RM: Yes there were because we were going with these things and when you come across them they would just say pass.

TM: And where did it end now?

RM: It ended when the circle started and after a long time the police came and said that they saw Elsie at Swaziland and I said at Swaziland and they said yes and they would come repeatedly and this other time they came these other Boers saying that they saw Elsie at Swaziland and I cried they said they killed her and it was necessary and that was it.

TM: So when they come here they dont arrest you?

RM: They were searching and asking questions and all these things and I was living with these boys from Botswana here.

TM: So what are they doing are they giving you the money?

RM: Since he said he was going to give me and so on.

TM: So what are these kids eating?

RM: They are eating here at home, yes we are cooking and sometimes we were making bread because during the day they are in the meeting they were working underground.

TM: So is there any message that he gave to you to tell people?

RM: No he didn't because we were busy and Elsie went to Mozambique, when she came back she went with this other girl and went with her to Swaziland because she was going and she told me to go somewhere when we got to the boarder gate they asked us where are we going because there is no way and we had South African passport and after a while in the afternoon they gave us our passport and then that's was when we crossed to Swaziland, she went not knowing if it was for the first time going there and some were attending school I dont know where are they from because it's not far to the boarder gate they showed her to us and then said you can take her away and we came back, after we have arrived people were coming and taking him getting into the car because there were no tarred road and they were climbing into cars...

TM: Who was climbing into the car?

RM: The child from next door there were many of them and then we left here and went to the place were he was going we are going to help him, but he was under I think it's about thirty minutes and you will find me here, so that there cannot be mix-ups and when he comes back we go because the Boers were killing them and some were killed in the stadium and when w depart from there we went to this other place and the following day we went to...we went to the park because we were going to the funeral.

TM: Was he grown that time?

RM: He was and he doing six and when we took him the things we brought for him because he was staying there at they call it Keyaleboha and there were even people from outside and he was attending school there it was work because when you go you live him there as the time went he was...he stayed there until the time he finished and Elsie was at Mozambique but they saw each other when they crossed there it was 18 February...

TM: In ninety eight?

RM: Nine tee

TM: Nine tee

RM: When was Mandela released?

TM: In nine tee four

RM: That time we are visiting at Kempton Park and I said to her Elsie you are the only one and I was explaining to them but I was explaining to the person that I see...and I said to them I want Elsie and I was hiring taxis and my brother's kid was the one taking them to her and now we at Cage it was at Moss street and they said why dont I replace children because he was taking them and sending them away because they were even preparing their Visas and my kid was also doing...he was driving a car already he was at Swaziland we knew because other times we left for Middleburg and from there we left and they were meeting

us at Namasha in this place at Swaziland and we would find the comrades and everything would be prepared even there, there are stories and we got there and it was fun...you know how many people we at Mozambique at that time?

TM: No

RM: About...close to hundred.

TM: In one day?

RM: In the white house and you must know that Mozambique there is...in the road there was...it was that time of the apartheid they were getting into the trucks.

Tm: The people in the truck are they from South Africa?

RM: No they are from there and we were chatting with them.

TM: Who were you chatting to?

RM: With my husband... [Inaudible] they were doing all these kind of things even them they were drinking beers in the tank it was very nice and the following day it was it was the return day.

TM: Saturday and Sunday?

RM: And we were in the office and now that comrades were going even you, you would want to get in

TM: It was nice?

RM: It was very fun with the whites some of them they were doing all kind of things.

TM: Who Khoza?

RM: Phosa not Khoza

TM: Mathews Phosa?

RM: Yes.

TM: Ohh...he was at Mozambique

RM: He was there.

TM: When you were visiting Elsie Were you telling her what's happening here in Tembisa?

RM: Yes we were telling her, we were going there and sometimes I would go with my son on a Good Friday and when we got there in Swaziland someone would give us a lift to Nashville it's Dindela and when we got there we would wait for her and we were supposed to get off

in the road and cross to Mozambique and we would meet with her and she would say people are dying and we would go back to Swaziland and the following day I...they would book me a flight and I would go travelling with a flight and she would come with the others and when the flight arrives at Mozambique they would say you are here for Elsie because when the flight arrives they were putting us there it were the hard times.

TM: After the unbanning of the ANC did you continue with Malibone?

RM: Yes I did big time in the train's Yoh... Yoh...

TM: What were you doing in the trains?

RM: We were singing.

TM: What kind of songs were you singing?

RM: We were singing struggle songs.

TM: Which ones?

RM: The one of the struggle.

TM: Are there some that you still remember?

RM: Songs like (laughs) inyamezana, Lusaka what... ace.

TM: What are you doing when you were singing?

RM: The train is in motion and people are getting off and those who are not they pass with it.

TM: Ohh...you are singing?

RM: There are struggle towns.

TM: Ohh...you were not recruiting?

RM: Yes we are recruiting everywhere we go.

TM: Ohh...so now you are recruiting for the ANC?

RM: Yes we are the ANC because it's there.

TM: So now that they have unbanned ANC are they coming back?

RM: Yes they came back.

TM: Do you still remember when Mandela came back after a long time how it was?

RM: Yoh...Yoh...it was very nice because there was his family from Nelspruit its Mpumalanga now.

TM: The comrades are going there now?

RM: Yes because now the comrades from...the youth is always coming out of prison the ones who were overseas yes and the woman from overseas are sending postcards from Durban because some were in the hospital and the doctor... [Inaudible] the box with...Dr Cole Man and the ones in hospital they were...the Doctor said Debra I will never let you out you are not well.

TM: He was saying that?

RM: You know when we were at Sun City the police...when we entered there we heard that Debra is being released from prison it was very nice.

TM: But when you thin can you say what made the children more especially the girls to have courage like they did?

RM: I think they were born brave because they took it from the mother.

TM: And how was the father?

RM: Their father was good okay but after a while I broke up with him he was not there.

TM: Ohh...he was not into politics?

RM: Yes he was not, he didn't care nut if you could enter in the barra they were special they were there.

TM: Which one?

RM: Debra they were always organising.

TM: Thank you.

RM: When they called meetings we were suppose to be there they didn't play around, they were throwing stone to police cars taking these big dustbin and throwing them in the street they were beating them with the tear gas and they were attending tanks.

TM: Let me thank you we are going to put them together, if you have photos old photos...

RM: I am going to look for them.

-----End of Interview-----