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Name of interviewee/s: Lucky Zimba

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LZ: Lucky Zimba

DM: David Mofokeng

Interview with David Mofokeng

LZ: Today it's the 09 November 2010...

DM: 2010

LZ: 2010, I'm conducting this interview on behalf of SAHA. I'm Lucky Zimba and I'm with Mr. David Mofokeng here at Teanong Section where I'm conducting the interview, how are you sir?

DM: How are you Lucky?

LZ: You can use any language that you feel comfortable with, and if I need any clarity I will let you know and this is not like a serious interview, it's like you are telling me a story and your experiences here in Tembisa.

DM: Yes, but I will tell you in Sotho.

LZ: There's no problem, we just need the information. So if you can tell us a bit about your history, who is your father and who were his parents?

DM: Well, my name is David Mofokeng. That is the name they used to call me back at home.

LZ: Even if you can say it in Sotho there is no problem.

DM: Ohh David Mofokeng. My mother was Evelyn Mokoena and my dad was Hendrick Mofokeng. They were originally from the Free State. They arrived a long time ago here in Johannesburg, but I think the first person who arrived here is... no let me say who arrived in Tikiline first was my grandmother who is my mother's mother and her name was Velemin Mofokeng. She was the first one to arrive here in Tikiline and then from there, as years passed she went to fetch her children from the Free State so that they come and live with her and be able to look for work. They did come and they worked in Kempton Park district, and it seems like life was hard for them in Tikiline, because people who worked in Elandsfontein were mostly from Tikiline and there were all kinds of tribes including foreigners, even the Nyasa's were there because they all came for work in the mines so it was them who were working there. My grandmother started making and selling brewed beer "Umcombothi" and after the men from the mines finished work they would be thirsty and they would come and quench their thirst by coming to my grandmother's place and have brewed beer while paying for it. The beer that my grandmother was making was very dangerous even the police didn't want it, I mean "umcombothi", so my grandmother dug a hole and buried the beer there so that when the police came they find nothing, so when people wanted beer they would fetch it from that hole but they had to be careful that no police sees them, because police mustn't know where the brewed beer is hidden. I don't know but they say that after some time when the police came they came with a stick so that they can check where the hole is, so my grandmother dug the hole a bit far from the house.

LZ: So if you can still remember, in which year did they say your grandmother arrived in?

DM: It was a long time ago; because I was born in 1949 so I don't know in which year did my grandmother arrive here.

LZ: So were you born in Tikiline?

DM: No, I was born in Free State; I can say that my grandmother came here in 1959 if I can put it in that way, but I was already born when she left and came here. We were staying in a boers farm.

LZ: Who did the farm belong to in Free State?

DM: I can say that where I was born... I was told that I was born in a boers farm, and the name of that boer was Dawie De Beers. And now they say when I was born I was very light in complexion, and that boer came and said "I heard that there was a baby boy here and he is very light in complexion and now I want to give him a name, and it must be David" and that is how I got my name. It was not from my four fathers or anything but, it was from a boer.

LZ: When growing up, how was life in Free State?

DM: Our life was hard; because we were wearing "Tshea" I don't know what you call it in Zulu, but... you are a Zulu right?

LZ: No I'm a Swati

DM: I don't know what you call it, but when you wear it, it was only covering the private part and we called it Tshea. I think you call it Ioheshu, and we were wearing that only and you would have nothing to cover your whole body with and girls were wearing "dithithane" which also covered up to a certain point.

LZ: So as you were growing up, what kept you going during the day?

DM: There were times where we would take the cows to the farm and in the evening we take the cows back home and some just stay there. Sometimes the farmer would plough beans and the boers used to call them kaffir boontjies, that's what they use to call them. Because they spread all over, so now they told us to harvest them and that was a hobby. Because we were going row to row harvesting them, and the boss told us that we were making money, because when you harvest it will still be fresh and you leave it as it is. After four days it dries out and when you come back they would ask you "where are the kaffir boontjies?" and he will tell you that you not doing your job and that is what your penny comes from and that's how we worked in the farms.

LZ: If you can still remember, how much was your first pay?

DM: A penny was a lot of money during that time, so I believe during that time they were giving us seven pennies. I was doing Sub A and in 1961 I was doing standard 1, and in 1962 I did standard 2, but I failed and I repeated it in 1963; I passed and in 1964 I did standard 3, 1965 I did standard 4 and 1966 I did standard 5 and I passed. When I was doing standard 6 some minor problems happened, but I did attend a bit and that is when I came to Tembisa.

LZ: In which year was that, when you were doing standard 6 and came to Gauteng?

DM: It was 1967 and when I did my standard 6 there were problems here, there was no Sotho and that is when I left school and started working in 1967.

LZ: Where were you working?

DM: I was working at Primrose Garage fixing cars, servicing them as it is now called. We were checking if they have oil, because that time it was the old oil and we were checking if the car has deify in the back and checking if the car has enough oil that's how we were working.

LZ: When you arrived here in Tembisa, how was it? And what did people say about Tembisa?

DM: When I arrived here in Tembisa... Tembisa was a very stupid township - that's how I can say it was. It was very low and unknown, if you go to Soweto and they ask you where you from, you would rather say Kaalfontein and that was the name that was used too much that time. Because when you say Tembisa it was like you from the rural areas because this township was very stupid and low. Secondly, as I was still in Tikiline, people who came to Tikiline from Tembisa... because people came to Tembisa in 1957 if not 1958 and the first section was... I was asking this other old man yesterday and he say it was Xubeni, so Xubeni and Eqaleni were the first sections here, but I don't know how others put it but this is how I know it. After Xubeni and Eqaleni there came Sedibeng, Mashemong and Mqansa these are the oldest sections here. After that there was Moriting section, Mangweni and Moyeni these are the old sections too, because there was lot of space then the boers started to build houses for the people using bricks. As time goes by they started developing other sections like Isithama after they developed Sgodiphola as it was called and started with Welamlambo, Sangweni... I remember it was 1967 when I arrived here people were already there at Umthambeka, I remember if you were a women with no husband you were able to take your older son and go apply for one and you would get it. My father said to this other woman who was their friend, she must go with me and apply for a house in Umthambeka and I refused. You can ask me other questions and I will explain.

LZ: If we can go back a bit, you said you were working on a farm. If you can still remember which year did you start working there?

DM: You see during that time we were staying there and attending school, we were school kids. When schools were closed we had time to go and work there in the bean farm, the ones they call kaffir boontjies. On Sundays when my brother didn't go to work... because I was a traditional person and when there was more brewed beer he would drink and when he was drunk he was unable to go and milk the cows, so we would go do that for him. Because he was the one who had a contract, we would go there and help him milk the cows and then we take it for processing. There was one pipe milk that has oil and the other one for milk with no oil, so in most cases the boers would give that milk to us because they said we are black and know nothing about milk and we would drink that...it had no taste, no oil no nothing but when the boss was not there we were able to take a bit of butter and put it in the milk, that's how we were working my boy.

LZ: You said... now we are talking about Tembisa, how was life here in Tembisa when you arrived?

DM: Life in Tembisa was very hard, because when we moved here they were using the bucket system and people who worked there were people from the Eastern Cape "amabhaca" and they were the ones collecting the buckets. So in most of the cases... when they don't know you... because

they were fetching it on Tuesdays and it was spilling when they came to take it, so if it was Friday, Saturday and Sunday the bucket would be full and because we are drinking on weekends and when you drink you have to go to the toilet now and then. So when the Bhacas came to collect it and find that it's full, they would just spill it in your yard saying that it's full and it will spill on them, so they have to empty it a bit, so that is how things were here in Tembisa. There were barras (beer halls) where our dads use to meet after work and the money that was made there it was for the boers not us blacks, the boers used their buildings here in Tembisa for selling alcohol and it was sold by our own people, so that we can always go there to drink - that was the system.

LZ: As you were working in Primrose, how was life and how were people treating you? Were the police harassing you or not?

DM: You see when you are talking about the police; it was very bad Mr. Zimba. I remember when we started to take identities here in Tembisa in 1967. It was bad, you see during this time we were running away because the police were on lunch and you couldn't go around the streets as you please like now, there was no such thing. I remember there was this other man called Ruben who was staying at Mashemong and he was a police officer, and black policeman carried no guns only shambok and he was able to control 18 people, but now you can't do that today. He was able to escort school kids to school and no one would run away and he didn't handcuff them but no one would run away, but now you can't they can even kill you even if there is only two of them. I remember in this other year, if you were loitering in the streets too much the police would be watching you because they were walking and not using cars. I always say that God is with me because I was very lucky... I remember one day early in the morning, I was going to Germiston with this other lady who was our next door neighbor and she was going to help me get an identity document. Immediately when we left the police came in and asked "where is that boy who stays here and he's not working?" and she told them that I just left to apply for an identity document. When you go to apply for an ID they give you a duplicate and when I arrived here at home they told me what had happened, and when they catch you and find that you can't pay a fine you were taken to Modderbee [prison] and that was where you were serving your trial.

LZ: If I can take you back a bit, when you arrived here in Gauteng you moved to Tikiline and from there you came to Tembisa, how was the move?

DM: When I came here, I didn't live in Tikiline I just came here in Tembisa at Sedibeng, because my parents had already left and came to live here in Tembisa and I don't know how they moved. It is said that the Boers took them in Lorries bringing them here in Tembisa, that's how people said it happened. Some say they were brought here by the soldiers and place you in shacks because at first it was shacks here, I remember in Oakmoor it was shack when I first arrived here. Even when I went to Soweto, because I loved Soweto and didn't want to stay here in Tembisa because it felt like I was living the rural area, so I moved to Johannesburg.

LZ: So the house that you were living in at Sedibeng, who did it belong to?

DM: My father was living in a two roomed house and there were seven of us, my father had a fight with my mother not knowing what had happened, because we didn't know what was happening between them as we were still young and we were not supposed to interfere as children. Then my

father didn't want us anymore so that's when my mother decided to take us to Free State and that's where we grew up

LZ: So there were seven of you in a two roomed house, how did you sleep in a two roomed house?

DM: I was living with my brother because I had a brother, when my mother decided to send us to Free State he decided to stay behind with my dad because we were scared of my dad so we decided to leave and he stayed behind. There were five of us in the two roomed house my father and mother were sleeping together in their room and the rest of us we were sleeping in the kitchen, because you know that two roomed houses its only one bedroom and a kitchen. We had to wake up early in the morning, because we had to prepare fire in order for us to keep warm and stuff.

LZ: You said you were not working when you moved to Sedibeng, so what did you keep yourself busy with during the day?

DM: Yes I was not working, so I used to stay here during the day and do nothing, but I only went outside in the morning only because I was scared that the boers are going to arrest me. First time I was arrested by Mr Mamabulo and he asked me why I didn't go to school, then he asked my mother why I didn't go to school and she told them that they said if I don't have the whole school uniform and books I mustn't come, so that is how I survived Modderbee. Hence I say that the Lord protected me from many things, because Mamabulo would come with his squat and he would come looking for me, because when you apply for an ID it used to take 3/3.

LZ: It sound like your aunt was a nice person, if you can describe her, what kind of person was she?

DM: When you look at my aunt you would think that she is a nice person, because you know that when you live with your step mother you will never live in peace. My aunt was not a nice person because if we were fighting, because there were three of us and you find that we were fighting and my dad was there. She would just leave the room and say nothing like a mother and that is where I saw that she doesn't like us, but acted like she did. I remember in the very same year when I say to my dad he must give me money so that I can go attend school, and she said my dad wouldn't give a man money for school because now I'm a man and that was the reason I couldn't further my studies.

LZ: So you got your ID at Germiston, how was life after that?

DM: After getting my ID, there was a friend of mine called Kunene whom I was getting information from and he was living at house number 109, that man was the one who taught me Gauteng because we were going together to Johannesburg, Rio, Dome Skyline and during that time Gauteng was very nice and we were travelling with by train. People were using knives; you will find people saying their ancestors work for them, but I say God works for me, because we would leave Rio at night and it was at Market Street. The movie that we were watching ended late and we would use a train again to return home, so that was the man who taught me Gauteng but mostly Germiston and Johannesburg, because I didn't like Pretoria as there was a lot of Apartheid because you would get arrested for watching people fighting. And Mr Kunene was the one who found me that job at Primrose and I worked with him. After some time he told me that he is leaving this job but he will come fetch me. I worked two to three weeks and he called me and said there was a job available, and the white guy that I was working for said "you know that when you leave by your own will and I didn't fire you, I could destroy your ID?" and I said to him "no you cannot destroy this one because

it's from here" so I left took a bus to Elandsfontein. He told this other guy who was working there and staying at Mashemong that he must tell me that he will ruin my ID, so I said to him go and tell him that this ID is 10A so that means I qualify in Gauteng. Because I was from the farms before mine was 101A and I was born in Free State, so when I applied for an ID here they asked me where I was born and I said Alexander. I must say Alexander Township helped me to be a permanent resident here.

LZ: So you told them that you belong here?

DM: Yes, if you were from the rural areas your ID would be written Bloemfontein and you had a contract of 5years, so when it expired you had to go back and renew it again.

LZ: So the guy that was sent to you by that white guy, what said to you?

DM: That white guy who was called Erick Ross, told the guy from Mashemong to tell me to come back to work or he will go to the pass office and ruin my ID if I don't want to come back to work, and I told him that he will not be able to ruin it because it's from here its 10A, so if he go and ruin it I will go and apply for a new one because this one will no longer be working and I will be able to get a new one, so that is what I said to him. So I left and worked at some company called Black Bosch, where I was working before I was earning R7.00 per week. You know what I was doing with that money? I was buying pants but that time I used to get my pants from the tailor and shoe I didn't just buy any shoe, you see this shoe it's a no name shoe. I was buying Brace I liked those shoes so much because they lasted. The shirts that I was buying were Vonella shirts you know them? They are very expensive I think now they coast some things like R200, but by that time it was only R8.00 and I was paying in installments.

LZ: Were you still living with your parents, when you were working?

DM: I was still living with my aunt and dad, but you know when you are living with your brothers...there was one thing that made me angry, because now we were no longer living in a 2 roomed house but four roomed house, so I had a brother who was older than me so every month we would contribute for food so that they can dish up for us, but we were made to share one plate and my brother was knocking off late than me so I had to wait for him before I could eat. And the other thing we had to eat chicken feet on their own. So that's when I decided to move out but before I moved I stopped eating here at home and stopped contributing money for food, you know what I would do? I would buy a packet of chips which was 5cent, half white bread and Fish which was much expensive, because it was 10cents then I would eat and have my drink after. So when I arrive here at home I would only drinking tea, my dad was drinking alcohol and he saw me one day but he was scared to face me, because you know that if you did something wrong they wouldn't tell you during the week but on weekends as they would be drunk. One Sunday he called me and he said I heard that you no longer eat here at home and I want to know the reason why, I told him that they dish one plate for the two of us to share and we don't get full but we do contribute money for food as we all working so that is the reason I boycotted food here at home, 1972 I moved to Difateng Section where I stayed with my other aunt.

LZ: When you got to your aunt?

DM: When I got there my life was very nice, I wanted to go live at hostel but my dad refused and I told him that I want to live my own life alone, so my dad said I'm not supposed to live in a hostel when I have a permit.

LZ: So the police didn't bother you?

DM: When at night?

LZ: Yes

DM: No because we had ID and you had to pay tax for your ID every year, I remember when I first took an ID in 1939 some police man who stayed at Isithama Section... whom I liked I don't know why but I did, he said to me "you were born in 1949 you are old and you suppose to pay tax, do you have money to pay tax?" and I said I don't have and he said I think it's better if you can reduce your year of birth and say you were born in 1950 and that is what I did.

LZ: You were still telling me about wanting to live alone?

DM: I was living here in Difateng and I had my own room where I slept, and in 1974/1975 I married the woman that I'm with now. But still I stayed at my aunt's place so now that I have taken a wife and stayed with her here, you not married yet right, who do you, live with?

LZ: No I'm not, I live with my mom.

DM: Your dad has run away? You see that it's not the first time even my dad disappeared, how many are you?

LZ: There are only two of us, a boy and a girl.

DM: So you have a sister?

LZ: Yes

DM: You didn't ask me how many we are, so we are five boys and two girls but six left and only one was left with my dad, he is still there at home because he was staying with my father so he inherited the house. I stayed at Difateng for four years and 1977 I got married but our lives were not so good because my aunt was also drinking alcohol. So when she was drunk she would chase us out of her home because I was stubborn and from the rural areas.

LZ: So if you can still remember, where did you meet your wife?

DM: I met her at Molapo in Soweto; Molapo was close to my uncle's place, I would see Pedi speaking women from Tembisa but I didn't like them that much, but where God wants you to choose from you will, so I met my wife there and found that she was a Sotho speaking lady who is from Lesotho and I'm from Free State and God choose her for me.

LZ: So after marrying her, were you still living at your uncle's place or was she staying at her home?

DM: No I didn't go to live at her place; you must never move in with a woman at her home, you will go crazy because they will make a fool out of you. We were living at Difateng at my uncle's house

and in 1977 I applied for a house the one that we are in now, but it took time because I think there was fraud in the municipal office, because many people who applied for houses in 1977 stay in Motheong .

LZ: So you got your house in 1977?

DM: No I didn't get my house in 1977; we got these houses in 1983.

LZ: So you were still living at your uncle's place?

DM: I left my uncle's place because we were fighting, and I saw that I was going to beat him up so I decided to move, and I went to live with my brother at Mlonjaneni because he was living there. I didn't live there for a long time; it was only for 2/3 months because if you move with your brother who is married and you also with your children life wouldn't be so nice. So I moved to Mashemong with Mr. Masuku and we lived so nice there because there were no fights and all, that is why in his books he said "a person's life in the world is to fight" because we are fighting and fighting to even live with your parents, are you working?

LZ: Yes I'm working.

DM: So you helping your mom with house hold chores; is your mom working?

LZ: No she is not working.

DM: So where do you get money for food, does your father send it?

LZ: No.

DM: But does he live here in Tembisa?

LZ: No, he is not here?

DM: Where is he, has he run away with other women?

LZ: No, I don't know.

DM: Ohh... so your mom is the one who is taking care of you?

LZ: Yes.

DM: How old is your mother?

LZ: She is not that old.

DM: Do you have rooms outside?

LZ: No we don't have them.

DM: So you are helped by the Lord, you now that in this world you fight for survival. So I got this house in 1983 sometime in November, we were living at my parent's house in Sedibeng because we had moved back to Sedibeng. After my father passed on in 1977 my step mother took the furniture and sent it to Lesotho were she came from, and when we asked about it she said they stole them.



When I moved back in and as I was applying for permits for my children they said I must fill in papers so that I can be able to get a house, and I was told to stay at my fathers house because now it's ours and I refused because I knew that as it was a family house it was going to cause problems for us, it's better for me to get my own place.

LZ: So as you were busy moving, are you moving with children?

DM: My first Born was born in 1976; we left him with my uncle and my second born who is an albino was born in 1978 and we were only moving with the second born.

LZ: So you got a house and settled down, how was it like after you got a house?

DM: Yes, I was able to stand outside and say this is my house.

LZ: Were you still working during that time?

DM: Yes I was still working.

LZ: Where were you working?

DM: I was working at some company called Black Debouch in 1981, before I got this house I was already hit by a stroke and paralyzed like this, but I was able to work for my kids so that they can get something to eat.

LZ: As you were moving from house to house, what was it that made you unhappy and keep you fighting with relatives?

DM: What I didn't get the most was that lets say I live with you but my life was not nice, and secondly in some other times...when I started renting I was renting an inside room not the one outside like other people. You see when I'm renting I see my life being nice because my wife was able to use the kitchen as she pleases, other thing when we live as family in one house and the others can't afford to buy their children fancy food as you do, they can end up poisoning your family because of jealousy. It was nice but at the same time not nice, so I saw that living alone was the best solution ever.

LZ: What were you doing for entertainment, if you not at work?

DM: I was different from the others, when I was on leave I didn't want to see myself in Tembisa. I would take my wife to the rural areas, because when I started working they would give me 3weeks of leave and I wouldn't be at Tembisa for 2weeks, I would come back on the last weekend knowing that on Monday I have to go back to work, unless I go to Linden where my mother was staying because I hated Tembisa and didn't want to see it, if it was for me I would've stayed in Soweto.

LZ: So when the riots started, how was it affecting you in terms of work?

DM: It was hard because there was this thing called stay away and you are not supposed to go to work, it means that transports are being boycotted and if you can force to go to work you must know that you mustn't return afternoon because you were going to get beaten. I remember when I was still living at Difateng it was stay away because people were fighting...I was going to work and when I came back I had tough time getting off there at Limindlela station, and was helped by some

Russian who lived in Motheong and they knew about this but I didn't. In 1977 when the fight between the Boers and school children started, my uncle in Soweto was sick. When things were bad here in Tembisa I left For Free State to fetch my grandmother, the Boers and when we arrived here things were very bad buses burned and buildings vandalized, so we just got off at Park Station heading to Naledi in Soweto and my grandmother asked what was happening as she saw burned buses. So I said to her it's not something serious they were fighting only to find that it was more serious than that, we didn't have televisions so we were listening to the radio and lot of children died and places vandalized.

LZ: You talked about the stay away, if you can still remember in which year was it and what was it for?

DM: If I remember correctly it was in 1977/1978, there were times were they will tell you that no one is going to work because we had a Sharpeville holiday but the Boers didn't want it saying it was nonsense we must come to work because this is not a holiday, so that's how things worked.

LZ: Thank you so much, if there is some information that you remember I can come again so that we can conduct another interview.

DM: Secondly you can give me your address, and I will invite some people and call you to come over.

END OF INTERVIEW...





