



| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Project name: | Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive Project |
| Date of interview: | 05/06/2011 |
| Location of interview: | Bulawayo |
| Language/s of interview: | English |
| Length of interview: | 1:15:33 |
| Name of Interviewer: | Mary Ndlovu (MN) |
| Name of interviewee/s: | Regina Ndlovu (RN) |
| Name of translator: | n/a |
| Name of transcriber: | Tracy Doig |
| Notes on access and use: | |
| Audio file name/s of interview: | |

TRANSCRIPTION

| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | This is an interview with Regina Ndlovu who has agreed to be interviewed for the Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive Project. Interview is being conducted by Mary Ndlovu on behalf of Mafela Trust and SAHA and it's being conducted on the 5 th June 2011 in Bulawayo. |
| MN | Regina, I think if you ... maybe first you could just tell us a bit about yourself. How you got involved in the struggle? |
| RN | Okay. First and foremost, I am Regina Ndlovu who was also known as Regina Msipa and my pseudonym was Buhle Siyazi. It all started in 1977 on the 19 th of August when I started my journey to Botswana. And the first point of call was a place called Mutabeng. And we were followed by jet planes. Being a mixture of people from Mberengwa and the greater part of Gwanda. And on our arrival at Mutabeng, it was a bit difficult because the Rhodesia forces were flying all over the place, trying to attack us but the community at Mutabeng was very much supportive. They tried to hide us in their houses and provided us with meals and they quickly communicated with their counterparts in Bobonong to arrange fast transport for us. We travelled by foot and made tracks on our way to Bobonong. We were trucked to Bobonong and at Bobonong we were also provided with meals and arrangements for transport to ferry us to Francistown were made. And within the same night, we were transported to Francistown. |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| | When we arrived at Francistown in 1977, there was no camp for girls. The ... we were the first group maybe to be taken into... They were using the Botswana Prison Service for the ladies. And after two days we had a friendly match with the Botswana prisoners as girls. When, when, when they realized we were very good in netball, they started attacking us and the males from their camp came rushing to our rescue and from that day, no refugee was accommodated in the Botswana, Francistown Prison. [Laughter]. I don't know how they made arrangements to get tents for us. That same night, tents were pitched for the girls, and the Botswana Prison Service made sure they threw everything that belongs to us ... because we were being accommodated there ... the process was we go there, feed there and we did not have enough time maybe to associate outside. We were always kept indoors. Mmmn, and I remember... |
| MN | Where? At the... |
| RN | At the Francistown Prison... |
| MN | At the Francistown... at the prison? |
| RN | Yes, the ladies compartments. Ja. And the other day, the, the camp commander who was commanding the male camp was ... he had access to us at the Prison Service. One day when he was coming to check on us, we realized that the head of the Prison Service had actually connived with our enemy to come and take photographs of us and conduct some interviews. Ja, there was really heated debate and the relationship began to be sour by then. Yes. |
| MN | So you were, you were at the prison but they had removed you from contact with the ... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | ...Botswana Prisoners? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Oh right |
| RN | We were given our own block. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes, like, just like prisoners with the toilet inside there. [Laughter] We would only go out to have our meals and come back |
| MN | How many were you? |
| RN | I have lost count of the number but it was ... we were quite a number because we ... during my time, we had occupied about two blocks. Yes. So when the camp commander negotiated for us to be like given time to relax and associate, that's when this friendly netball match was arranged ... [laughter] |
| MN | That caused all the trouble |
| RN | Yes. But then the match caused all the trouble. That was the separation between the Botswana prisoners and the refugees. We... a, a, a female camp was developed from that day. Yes, we were the pioneers of the female camp in 1977. |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | But it was still at the prison? |
| RN | No. |
| MN | Oh, then it moved away from the prison? |
| RN | Yes, yes. They pitched some tents within the male camp. |
| MN | At Francistown transit camp? |
| RN | Francistown transit camp |
| MN | Ah, okay |
| RN | Yes. And there was then quick formation of tight security so that our male counterparts do not encroach ... [laughter] to the ladies of ... during the night. Yes. I don't remember how long I stayed in Francistown. We were then taken to Bobonong ... to... yes it's in Francistown. From Francistown, it was ... no, we went to Selebi Phikwe. Sorry, point of correction. All this happened at Selebi Phikwe. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes. From Bobonong we went to Selebi Phikwe. Then from Selebi Phikwe we went to Francistown. In Francistown, there was better accommodation. |
| MN | Okay but was this at the transit camp? Or... |
| RN | Yes, it was still a transit camp. There were a block of buildings with bunk beds for the ladies. Yes, but there were other refugees. I don't know where ... which party they belonged to but we nick-named them <i>madzakudzaku</i> . ¹ They had their own way of commanding themselves. Yes. |
| MN | They were Zimbabweans? |
| RN | They were Zimbabweans. Yes, at Francistown. And these ones now were very familiar with the set-up of the camp. They would sneak overnight and come through the windows to rape us. Yes. I remember the ... one day I was trying to turn and I felt this unusual breathing beside me. And when I wanted to scream, he closed my mouth, "shut up". Fortunately, I was next to someone. I stretched my hand like this ... we all screamed. He tried to jump through the window and our security guys who were manning the camp manhandled him. Alas, it was bad. It was bad. He was beaten. |
| MN | But he was from this other group that you ... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | ... hadn't been able to identify? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | He wasn't with ZAPU? |
| RN | Yes. He was not within ZAPU, yes. They were being catered for within that same camp. |

¹ This was the term used to refer to militia loyal to Muzorewa. The literal meaning is something that pricks



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| | They had their own room. But the fact that they had overstayed in that place and they were very familiar with the set-up, yes. Even when we were going to the toilets, you would make sure you don't go alone. Because if you would try to go alone, they would just grab you. That is in Francistown. And in Francistown I stayed for a week. In Francistown we were supported, I don't know by who. Before we, we, we went to the airport we were given new tennis shoes, food stuffs and we, we were told to take a good bath because we were going to board a plane. [Laughter]. We were so excited. Because it was our first time... |
| MN | To go on a plane? |
| RN | ...in our lives, to go on a plane. |
| MN | And what were you expecting at the other end? |
| RN | And the, the, the Commissar told us, "today it's a very special day. You are going to board a plane for the first time in your lives. And where you are going there are good opportunities. Those who would want to be air hostesses will learn from there and where you are going you will have the opportunity to be an air hostess. Those who want to be nurses, now is the time. Because all starts in the plane. What we have been doing here as military exercises, it's the starting point. You are going to the war but at the same time you will have opportunities to be educated". They were very honest with us ... the camp commander was very honest with us, to say "With ladies you will not go to the bush but you will play a very supportive role in being nurses ... we would want you to train and treat people at home. When you back at home you will be skilled, most of you". We were so excited. And for sure we went to Francistown airport. There we were in the plane. Off to Zambia. It was a great experience in our lives. And fortunately for the group that went with me... I was given a role as the medical aid person, the medic. |
| MN | How old were you at this time? |
| RN | 1977, I was 16. Yes. |
| MN | So were you one of the older girls in the group or were you about the same age? |
| RN | The problem with me, I was not very old but I was very tall. I had this problem during the liberation struggle of age mixing. One day I would be put with my age-mates but my height would then deny me to be there. The other time I am put with those older than me but then I would behave in an immature way. [Laughter]. It was very difficult to associate, I was always either there nor there. |
| MN | Okay but what was your role then as a medic? |
| RN | Okay – to make sure anyone who is not feeling well, I report to the relevant authority, get medication or if there is need for anyone to be taken to hospital, I would accompany the person to the hospital. When they come back, if they are not well, I monitor whether they are getting their medication et cetera et cetera |
| MN | Mmn, so they gave individuals those roles? |
| RN | Those roles, yes. One will be given the role to be the group commander. One will be given the role to be the commissar, to make sure morale is high within the group. You ... there |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| | were limited radios. One person would go and listen to the news, come and share the information with the group |
| MN | Okay, so you went with a group from Francistown? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | And then you got to Lusaka. What happened? |
| RN | When we arrived in Lusaka, it was a great experience again. The old man, Joshua Nkomo had come to see people arriving at the airport. I had an opportunity to greet him hand by hand. I had an opportunity of him touching my head. He said " <i>ubuyile mtanami uzokwenzani ucake kangaka</i> " [trans: you have come my child, why are you looking so thin?] - I was very slim. [Laughter] And at the airport, that's when we learned that everyone, especially women and men, most of them were accommodated at Nampundwe. When we arrived at the airport, we had this opportunity of the old man asking those who were with him to say " <i>kanje namhlanje lababayangaphi otikinini</i> " [trans: so where are these youngsters going today?]. "They are going to Victory Camp. They are no longer going to Nampundwe". Yes. Meaning that Victory Camp was accommodated by the Angolans before we occupied it, in 1977. So all the ladies were at Nampundwe. So, in August 1977, Victory Camp was then occupied by ZPRA or ZAPU women. Old women, youth, children and smaller boys. Yes, occupied Victory Camp. |
| MN | So when you got there you were one of the first groups to go directly? |
| RN | No, they had already removed some from Nampundwe. Yes, to Victory Camp. So there were already people at Victory Camp when we arrived in September, somewhere in September. Ja. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | And then when you arrived, what happened? |
| RN | When I arrived, things changed. All the laughter was over. I had a glance of my cousin who left me in Selebi Phikwe. She went ... we came together from home up to Selebi Phikwe. But we were then dispatched in batches from Selebi Phikwe to Francistown and to Lusaka. She was a changed person. She was wearing an unusual attire - a combat - different from what I used to know. Ja, and the atmosphere was more military than what we used to see at Selebi Phikwe and Francistown. The reception was a military reception. When the vehicle ... the vehicle on its own ... ja, changed us, changed our mood, affected us so much. It was a military vehicle, when we were taken from the airport to the camp. And on the way we started to see the long grasses, and so on. We said, "Where are we going now? It is like we are going to the bush. Are we already going to fight?" [Laughter]. Until we arrived at the camp and the, the security officers who were manning the camp were ladies in their uniforms and with guns. Ja, it was quiet to all of us in the car. And the driver had to report in a language that we were not used to, it was a military language. And he was shown where to drop us. We were made to queue in a military way and we were immediately addressed, "Welcome, this is Victory Camp. We are, we are not trusting you. |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| | <p>Some of you might be Selous Scouts. We will be conducting personal interviews and from now on, forget your name. We are going to give you another one. And get used to it. Remove your shoes. The ladies will be searched by other ladies and the males by other males.” But fortunately it was a female camp. We were all attended to by female trained guerrillas. Most of them were said to have trained in Tanzania. And most of them were from Plumtree. “Remove your pants so that we see you don’t have any explosives with you, you are not carrying any explosives here.” Ja. Okay. “Right, we have a list of names.” If you were lucky you would be told to choose. If you were unlucky you would just be given one. I was lucky to be asked to choose. That’s where I chose the one called Buhle Siyazi. So my pseudonym was Buhle Siyazi. Okay. “And you are no longer Regina Msipa, from today you are Buhle Siyazi. Anything that you see here, belongs here. And you now belong here. And if you see someone dirty there, that is what you are going to be. You have come for a liberation struggle and this place is not your home. But it will be your home from today, militarily, until further notice. Military life is based on orders so be prepared to take orders. From now on, I am saying clothe yourself, wear your clothes. If I say, your dress, you pick your dress.” And that was that. And we were shaking. You know, being our first time. “And everyone who is here does not have a family – <i>akula mama wakhe, akula baba wakhe, akula sisi wakhe</i>. [trans: your mother is not here, your father is not here, your sister is not here] So an old person you meet here is your mother, younger than you is your sister, older than you is your sister, young brother, sister. No tribalism. You don’t come from Gwanda, you come from this camp. You don’t have a language of your own. Any language which is spoken here is your language. We don’t want to hear anyone calling someone Shona, Ndebele, a Venda, Kalanga. You are one. From today onwards.” And from there on, we were then shared amongst the commanders who were there. There were platoon... there were company commanders, platoon commanders. So we would be shared according to company commanders. Yes. Company so and so, you are getting so many people. And from ... in the company, then the company commander will share you to a platoon or to a section. But you will be given a blanket as a starter, because we had nothing with ourselves. Yes.</p> |
| MN | And where were you sleeping then? |
| RN | Okay, 1977, there were structures that were left by the Angolans. Yes, so the, the company commander would accommodate you depending on which platoon or which section. |
| MN | So there were buildings? |
| RN | Yes, we were not too many by then so the buildings would accommodate us but there were few tents |
| MN | There were some tents? |
| RN | Yes. Tents were mostly used by elder people. |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | This type of tents in this photo? This type of round tents? [4A-13-36] |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| RN | Yes |
| MN | How many would they accommodate, each tent? |
| RN | It could be a section. A section ... |
| MN | How big is a section? |
| RN | A section would have, is it 11? I am not so sure. I have forgotten these things. [Laughter]. A section would have about 11. Yes. 11 people or so. |
| MN | And if it rained? Would these tents keep out the water? |
| RN | At times. At times, not. Yes. And worse of it were the toilets. |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | Ja, because we would dig our own toilets. Try to put wood and so on, but at times would, they would be very bad because if you would slip, you would [laughter] either fall in and if there were no people around you to help you [laughter] they will find you in a pool of mess. |
| MN | Oh dear |
| RN | Yes. And the, the, the good part of this camp, it had a bathing place. It was a round place with showers inside but because the whole thing was about sharing, they would manage time. How many minutes you spent there and they would control [laughter] running of the water. At first, the first time I only managed to wash my head and this other part [laughter] of the body... |
| MN | So you learned to become fast? |
| RN | Yes. The whole thing was, like, to learn to be very fast, to share, to accommodate each other and to understand that the place was not secure, you might be attacked. So you were ... 1977 to mid, mid-1978, everyone who was in the camp was doing military exercises as a defense mechanism. |
| MN | Okay. |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | So were you not going to school then? |
| RN | No, the school was started in June... is it July – July, August 1978. |
| MN | I see. So before that you were just doing military... |
| RN | Before that military exercises and when these attacks started, raids by the Rhodesia Front. The, the old man - I am sure with the support of other African states - asked the United Nations to declare Victory Camp a United Nations camp |
| MN | I see |
| RN | To be spared from the military raids |
| MN | Okay, so up to that point it was a, it was a ZAPU camp? |
| RN | Ja, it was a ZAPU camp and as you can see these shelters, underground shelters, where |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| | everyone, everyone in the camp was conscientised and trained how to dig a defensive pit.[4A-93-05] |
| MN | What do you think that was going to defend you from? Did you feel safe if you went in there? |
| RN | Honestly, it was not 100% safe but it was like, if no one had seen me going underground and, and they were, they were like throwing bomb shells ... |
| MN | From the planes? |
| RN | From the plane, from the top, I would be saved |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | But if it was artillery and they had noticed me then ... |
| MN | Ja |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Then they would get you |
| RN | It was mostly to defend us from the bombshells and the, the artillery point of view, it was if no one has told the enemy that there are people underground, then we would still be safe |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | But did, did such an attack ever take place? |
| RN | It was an attempt |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes. It was an attempt really. And we were scared, we, we ran around the camp. Some even went out of the camp. The security guys had a lot of work to follow people up and bring them back |
| MN | But why didn't you go into your pits then? |
| RN | We were caught unaware. Some went. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Some did not |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Because we were caught unaware. It was a mass parade. The old man was there and I am sure the enemy got hint that people were gathered. He wanted to attack us massively, yes. |
| MN | Okay, so you weren't close to your pits? |
| RN | Some went close and some went out. Yes |
| MN | Okay. But that was before the school started? |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| RN | Yes. Before the school started |
| MN | But then after the school started, did you still have the pits... |
| RN | No |
| MN | ... or you didn't need them anymore? |
| RN | No, didn't need them anymore. |
| MN | So this was just during this earlier period? |
| RN | Yes because the camp had been declared a refugee camp. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes, not a military camp. The confusion was between 1977 and before July 1978. |
| MN | That's when there was a problem? |
| RN | Yes, yes. |
| MN | But then, so during that earlier period the camp was commanded by women, the ZPRA women? |
| RN | No |
| MN | No? |
| RN | Before '78 it was, the commander, the camp commander was a man called Cecil Banda |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes, and I still remember some of the security officers. There was Cecil, there was Cecil Banda, there was Jane. I have forgotten her surname, there was Jane. There was Sylvester. There was someone called Audrey. There was another security man called Seretse. I remember the one who was taking care of the logistics in the kitchen, we nicknamed, we nicknamed him Ncudi, he was called Mdluli. Yes, and Jane and Audrey then left in June 1977 with the first group of women to train. |
| MN | '77? |
| RN | Yes, to Mkushi |
| MN | But I thought that you were only there in '78... 70... later in '77? |
| RN | I, I, I went to ... no, '78, sorry |
| MN | Ja, okay |
| RN | Yes it was... |
| MN | Then she went to Mkushi? |
| RN | The first group went to, went in June 1978. |
| MN | To Mkushi? |
| RN | To Mkushi. |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | These were the ones that were attacked there at Mkushi? |
| RN | Yes, in the second group |
| MN | Oh, it was ... okay |
| RN | Yes. The first group had almost finished their training. And the second group that is the one that was mostly attacked because they were caught during their process of training and they were ... had not really attained full tac... combat tactics to protect themselves. Yes. |
| MN | So after, after that period ... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | ...when they took the women who were being trained off to Mkushi... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | ... they said you were going to remain going ... well, before we get to that... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | What were you feeling during this period? You weren't going to school, you weren't being sent to be nurses or air hostesses. What, what were you thinking? |
| RN | The, the ZAPU Commissariat department would keep you hoping. We never lost hope. Even during these military raids, they would make sure... massive counseling though, yes. "We are tending to this. This is a security problem. We have beefed up security. You are now surrounded with security personnel. Don't stress". And so on. "And very soon the camp will not be attacked anymore." I remember visits were done by different politicians and... is it 1978, Sally Mugabe even came to Zambia. Yes. And, and the old man himself was always coming to make sure we trust in him and trust that the camp will never be attacked anymore. Yes. And Dr. Kaunda was also invited to come and address us that "Feel secure, this is not going to happen anymore". Yes. |
| MN | Okay, but were you wondering whether you were going to go to school or what was going to happen to you? |
| RN | School started before the classrooms were even there. The moment the second group of ladies were taken to Mkushi ... |
| MN | Yes |
| RN | The rest who remained were grouped into different categories, in categ... I mean grades. You get my point. Primary and secondary. And, and male teachers were then transported during the day and taken back. And hope started building among us. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes. And ... |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | Okay, but before that, for some months you were wondering what was happening? |
| RN | It, it didn't take long |
| MN | It didn't take long? Okay. |
| RN | Didn't take long, everything was done quickly because they wanted to make sure the, the, the declaration that this camp is now a school camp, it's seen, yes and it's felt, yes. |
| MN | Alright |
| MN | So then you were put in a class? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | And... |
| RN | And provided with teachers. At first, they considered learned people ... although who did not have qualifications as teachers but who had that secondary knowledge ... to attend to lower grades. And maybe some who had the Standard Six would also attend to lower grades. And the secondary ones were attended by maybe those who had ... who were at teacher's trainings here at home before joining the liberation struggle. They were like vetting their knowledge. Yes, and as time went by, they thought of bringing in male teachers. And Paul Matshaka was then introduced to us as the principal. Yes. As time went by, they then picked even amongst the trained personnel, teachers, qualified teachers to come and join the teaching field. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. And then they built classrooms? |
| RN | They built classrooms |
| MN | They built... what buildings are these? [2A-10-14] |
| RN | These, these are classrooms. |
| MN | Are these classrooms? They are not dormitories? |
| RN | No. Okay, these are dormitories. There were dormitories and classrooms. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Right |
| RN | And these, some of these ladies are... were elderly ladies who were given the role of being matrons. Yes. Our dormitories were a block with a passage and two doors on the other hand. The other matron would sleep just close to the other door and the one, and the other one to the other door. So to monitor our movements during the night. |
| MN | Okay, so they were just traditional matrons as you would get in any boarding school? |
| RN | Ja |
| MN | Okay. Then in this photograph ... [1A-42-15] |
| RN | Yes |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | ...and these, these are classrooms then, are they? |
| RN | Yes, these are classrooms |
| MN | And what, was this common that the whole group would, would assemble like this? |
| RN | I am not sure. This group, is it a group of boys, isn't it? Are these girls or boys? |
| MN | Some of these look like boys, yes. They've got trousers and then... |
| RN | We used to wear trousers |
| MN | But some are girls. Oh, so you also wore trousers? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | They look like boys, these ones. |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | There's a good one, this one's a girl |
| RN | No, because if...yes. Because these young boys were later on removed from Victory Camp to JZ. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes, but when the class started they were there and later on when JZ was also declared a refugee camp, they were then moved to JZ |
| MN | Okay. This was the first JZ near Lusaka |
| MN | And what would they be assembled like this for? Would they assemble every day or would this be a special occasion? |
| RN | It will be a special occasion because what would happen now – there was one special day for everyone to assemble... but then we would wake up from the dormitories every morning, go to the kitchen, get our meals according to our groups |
| MN | Oh, okay. |
| RN | Yes, yes. |
| MN | And were they still, were they class groups or were they... |
| RN | They were class groups |
| MN | They were now class groups, not military groups |
| RN | To make order; to say maybe the grades ones and twos, this time they are going to the kitchen and so on and so on |
| MN | Okay. So you would go... |
| RN | Ring the bell to start everything, maybe go to assemble for the morning prayer and so on. It was a normal school set-up. |
| MN | Like a school. In the dormitories, were you in, in age groups or were they mixed? |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| RN | We were in age groups, yes. |
| MN | Okay. So the young ones must, some of the young ones must have been quite young? |
| RN | And, well... |
| MN | Here we even got some babies [1G-09-13] |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Where did these babies come from? |
| RN | Some, some had babies within the camp. As I said, that there were security personnel and most of these security personnel were men. And when nature would call its course, some ladies would sneak to, to, to, to you know to fulfill their [laughter] natural needs and so on. |
| MN | Did, did some of them come, arrive pregnant? |
| RN | Some arrived pregnant, some got pregnant there. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. And there was provision for them? Did they continue going to school? Because they look quite young these girls. |
| RN | Those who had maybe other elder people to take care of their children would be allowed. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. Otherwise they would have to look after the babies themselves? |
| RN | Yes. Yes. |
| MN | And... |
| RN | Oh, this one now. |
| MN | Yes. Do you remember this? [2A-04-23] |
| RN | Yes. The fact that there were elderly people in the camp who would feel shy to, to join class with children. They were then recognized. There was a very big building. Before everything started we would call it 'Big Bar', taking it from the Big Bar here in Bulawayo. Yes. It was then developed to be a factory. Machines were put in there. And elderly people within Victory Camp and other males from the workers' camp would come every day to sew uniforms. Yes. |
| MN | The uniforms for? |
| RN | ZPRA |
| MN | For the military... |
| RN | The military, yes. Yes. |
| MN | Did they also make clothes for the children, the refugees? |
| RN | Not to my knowledge. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. So they were, they were producing military... |
| RN | Yes, they were producing a lot of things |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | These were hand machines, were they? |
| RN | Yes, they were hand machines |
| MN | And there seem to be quite a large number of people there working. |
| RN | Yes. There were a large number and you see the, the catchment of ZPRA was wide. There were people who left Zimbabwe whilst working in the industrial area of Bulawayo, yes. There were designers within the groups. |
| MN | Okay. So a lot of these would have been experienced in this ... |
| RN | Yes, yes, yes. |
| MN | Because I was going to ask how they would choose these older ... well they are not old women really. How would they choose which ones would go to military training and which ones would be coming... |
| RN | You know... |
| MN | ... to these productive units? |
| RN | There was a lot of skill within the ZAPU people. They would then make sure they, when things were settling, they would grade people according to their skills. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | And utilize their skills, and amongst this group there were people who left from Bulawayo who were working in the clothing industry... who had the knowledge of designing, some who had knowledge of fixing the machines when they had broken up. And especially those who did not qualify for military training but had other skills. |
| MN | They wouldn't qualify because what? |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | Because they were too old or? |
| RN | Some were too old. Some had some... |
| MN | Physical... |
| RN | Physical disablements and so on. They would make sure that person was also tapped into another system. Yes. That's why they had, we had the camp called workers' camp. All males, fe..., I mean males would not qualify, were accommodated at the worker's camp. |
| MN | And then they found some useful occupation? |
| RN | Yes, some useful occupation. |
| MN | Okay. |
| RN | ZAPU was very productive. Yes. |
| MN | There seem to be visitors here. With ... [2A-10-14] |
| RN | With the old man |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | ...the old man |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | Was this common to receive visitors like this? |
| RN | Yes. It was. Especially when the camp was then declared a refugee camp. Yes. |
| MN | And how did you feel when you saw these visitors coming? Did you wonder what they were doing there or did they explain to you what they were doing? |
| RN | At times the explanation would come after the visitors had left. It depended whether they wanted to meet with us or not. So the camp commanders would meet with the visitors but maybe too the following day they would brief us. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. Then... you talk about the camp commanders. After it became a school... |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | ... were there still military commanders there? |
| RN | Yes. To man the security of the camp. |
| MN | Alright. |
| RN | Yes. To also to check on us. We were girls and besides the enemy, men would encroach to come [laughter] |
| MN | You needed to be protected from your... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Okay. So these were the dormitories. |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | How many would be in a dormitory? |
| RN | There were bunk beds. Was it 11 on the other, on one side. 22. 11 this side. No, more than that. 11 times two is 22. 22 on this side, 22 on this other side. Makes 44 because we were using bunk beds. Oh, entertainment part of it. |
| MN | Yes. |
| RN | We had a lot of sophisticated traditional dancers. The majority of them came from Plumtree, the <i>amabiza</i> thing. Yes. That was entertaining. [2A-61-28] |
| MN | Okay. And where were they staying these people? |
| RN | Some of them, the ladies we stayed with. They were a group, the ladies... |
| MN | These look like men here. |
| RN | Okay. These men, the young ones, the young men, some of them came from JZ, some of them came from workers' camp. Yes. |
| MN | And would they come and entertain you frequently? |



| | |
|---------|--|
| Speaker | Dialogue |
| RN | Yes. Depending on what occasion is there. Yes. |
| MN | Sometimes maybe there were visitors. |
| RN | Yes. If there are visitors coming, then they would come and entertain. And you know, when it was a school, they would arrange normal entertainments days to keep us happy. Yes. |
| MN | What other entertainments would you have? Other than this? |
| RN | Okay. Netball, soccer, music. There was this band by Skuza, Solomon Skuza. Yes, there would be a date set, band today it's coming, it would be an evening. There would be tight security to make sure girls and boys don't mess up [laughter] but there would be a lot of entertainment. |
| MN | So they would bring the boys in from JZ? Would they? |
| RN | No |
| MN | No? |
| RN | No. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | The security personnel ... would also provide security and... We would also do drama, poetry. There were a lot of talents within... |
| MN | And these would be organized by the teachers I suppose? |
| RN | Yes, the teachers and the camp commander. Ja. |
| MN | And this one? The kitchen. [2A-71-15] |
| RN | This is our kitchen |
| MN | Who did the cooking? |
| RN | Before it was a refugee camp, we would rotate, according to companies. We called ourselves companies - Company A, Company B, platoon so and so is taking care of the catering. But then, when it was declared a school camp, it was only elderly people who were cooking. |
| MN | Okay. |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | Now this looks like a sort of makeshift shelter rather than... |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | ...an indoor kitchen? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | Is this the way it remained throughout? Did they ever build a kitchen? A structure? |
| RN | No |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| MN | It remained like this? |
| RN | Ja, it remained like this. Ja, it remained like this. But then the, the diet of it, it had changed. |
| MN | Oh |
| RN | Ja. |
| MN | What did you eat? |
| RN | At first we were using aluminium plates. Tell you what... for the whole week, I could not enjoy my porridge. The plate would be hot, the porridge would be hot. I could not make it reach my lips [laughter]. And I would... and, and, and the commander, and the chef cook [inaudible] would be saying, <i>shesha, shesha, shesha, shesha</i> , [trans: hurry hurry hurry hurry][laughter] and I would just drop the plate together with the porridge and until up to lunch. And at lunch again, it is the same plate, the aluminium plate. It will be maybe a hot plate of sadza and hot beans. And there are other people again who are queuing for the same plate. |
| MN | For the same plate? |
| RN | The food is hot. I could not really manage to eat for two weeks. I developed skin disease. I was so thin. You know, they used to call it, one for the lips, they used to call it <i>amangwambe</i> [trans: sore lips] because the hot plate and the hot meal would burn my lips. And at times my tongue, I had sores in, on my tongue because of the hot meal. Yes. And... |
| MN | And then what happened? Did it change or you got used to it? |
| RN | I got used to it [laughter]. You know, we were coming from different backgrounds. I, I, I had been brought up in a family with not so many people. Being the only child in my family, my mother was giving everything that she had but now the situation there was different. Yes. ... Our meals composed of <i>okapenta</i> ² , you know we had <i>okapenta</i> . They were said to come from Malayo, Malawi with the snails. They would just be cooked as they are. At first we didn't like them but as time went by, ooh they were delicacy. The soup was sourish like . We would just pick the snail, throw it away and continue eating (laughter). And a bean that was very tough to cook called <i>umtshatshatsha</i> . We would call it <i>umtshatshatsha</i> , you know <i>umtshatshatsha</i> ? Somewhere in Gwanda, it's from the Sis ... Singa tree – <i>okudliwa zimbuzi</i> [trans: something eaten by goats]. Yes. and we would term that <i>umtshatshatsha</i> because it was tough to cook. We would only enjoy the soup of it. Ja, the soup, we, we in the long-term, we then had a tactic of boiling it and then enjoy the soup. Only if there was cooking oil. Yes. |
| MN | Which there usually wasn't |
| RN | Ja. Yes. And later on, there was this fish with too much salt, it was called, nicknamed <i>idakota</i> [laughter] and some were saying maybe it is the shark, some were saying is it a dried whale |
| MN | What was it? It was dried fish? |

² Very small fish commonly eaten in Zambia



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| RN | Yes, dried fish with very big lumps like this... |
| MN | Where did it come from? Do you know? |
| RN | I don't remember where it came from. But at times we were being treated with very delicious soups. I, I still envy that soup. That's when my body started changing. During the period we were served with that kind of soup. I liked it so much [laughter]. |
| MN | You didn't get vegetables? |
| RN | We did. ZAPU was rich in terms of skills. Those that came from home being in the agriculture department were also given room again to showcase their skills. There was a farm at Freedom Camp. Thereafter the bombardments it was turned into an agricultural camp. We would get our vegetables fresh from the farm. |
| MN | You didn't have any vegetable gardens at Victory Camp? |
| RN | Victory Camp, no, no. On a smaller scale, you know. When, when things had relaxed, elder people would do it but it was not on a broader scale, ja. |
| MN | Was there enough water there? |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | There was? |
| RN | There was because there was a running stream. For our bathing, we used a running, running water. There was a stream that was running throughout, just close to the camp [inaudible], so we would go there and bath. |
| MN | That was before they built these dormitories then? Ablutions? Even after that? |
| RN | After that we were not allowed because they feared maybe our enemies would be monitoring us through ... there was no fence by that ... a strong fence ... strong enclosure. But then when it was a school, they erected a very long security fence. And they made sure that the stream is within the fence, so they knew there was security now. Yes. |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | And tell you what. I always tell my children that from 1977, August 1977 up until October 1980, I was using cold water [laughter] |
| MN | So when they complain, then you... |
| RN | Yes, when they complain (laughter)... |
| MN | You didn't have any hot water at all? |
| RN | No. Ja, but then when the school was built, there were bathrooms. Yes, there were bathrooms though but because of the influx we would sneak, go there and bath. Yes, you would choose where you want to go. Or we were, at times provided with small buckets to carry our water to go and bath. Yes. |
| MN | So, at the time, how did you feel? Did you feel that it was a very harsh life? |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| RN | Oh yes. Yes. At times, honestly we would gather, admire some mountains that were a distance from our camp and imagine if we could sneak and run, maybe it's nearer home. Especially, was it, in two... in 1977, end of year, there was food shortage. Some other time, we stayed, not sure for how many days, without food. |
| MN | Really? |
| RN | It was a sobering atmosphere. We would cry, console each other and regret why we were, we were there. And at times, I remember when I was menstruating, I did not have enough cotton wool. And we were supposed to wake up at around 4 o'clock for military exercises we called toyi-toyi. And I was wondering what would happen when I am toyi-toying and without enough pad. My friends preferred to give me their pants. I wore about four of them, yes. We were so generous to each other at camp, yes. And last minute when the whistle was blown, I managed to see ... I had changed the role there, I was no longer a medical officer, yes. I then said to myself, what do I do? Should I go and wake up the medic and tell her that today I would not be able to go for toyi-toyi? But that was not supposed to be an excuse because they would tell you, this is a lifetime process. What would you do if you in the bush and the enemy was following you behind. Would you say, today I am menstruating, I will not shoot? [Laughter] |
| MN | And when you look back on it now... |
| RN | Ja |
| MN | ... do you think it was very harsh, unnecessarily harsh? Or do you think it was fair, the way you were treated? |
| RN | Personally on my own, I, I, I, I felt proud to have participated because I am strong psychologically. And I perceive difficulties as something that shall come to pass because I was once exposed into some difficult, very difficult conditions but I managed to pull through. And I have that passion of taking care of other people in the manner that I was taken care of by people whom I did not know. And provided all the support, provided all the education. I am what I am today because someone went out of her way or his way and provided me with the knowledge I have today. |
| MN | So you think this experience in the refugee camp really was a kind of a nation-building experience? |
| RN | It was... |
| MN | Or it was more an individual, personality building... |
| RN | One, they, they, the, the process was like you should not be dependent on someone; you have to be independent. Depend on someone for the purposes of development but for your security, be yourself. Have these skills in order to defend yourself because you came all the way for a liberation struggle and for you to participate, you have to be strong... Cultural aspects, they wanted us to like do away with most of our cultural norms |
| MN | Like, like what? |
| RN | Associating... some people were saying, "I am a Christian. I shall not kill" [laughter] but |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| | there you are in a military life. One way or the other you might end up doing so, if you are faced with the enemy. Would you just say, "okay come and kill me"? Or you will retaliate? They would train you to how to retaliate under difficult circum... situations. Yes. |
| MN | But you didn't have weapons training? |
| RN | We did not have them on a larger scale. We had them just to know what it is and how you can use it. |
| MN | If you have to? |
| RN | If you have to. Yes |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | And then, you, you... How far did you go in school there then? |
| RN | When I left here I was already in Form Two. I was in F2 ³ school in Gwanda. So I did my Form Three and O'Level. I was, I was already in O Level when I came, I was doing my O'Level... |
| MN | Okay, so you came... you must have been excited when you heard there was ceasefire, you were going to go home? |
| RN | When the news came, I tell you, it was something else. We, we ran around the camp celebrating, and tell you what, we were already writing letters to our parents here and they were also replying. I received my mother's photographs whilst in the camp and that day I celebrated and rejoiced. I had also sent my photograph to her. And she then believed that I am still alive. And I had been told she had been killed. |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | Oh my goodness. |
| RN | And the people who told me left the area when it was under attack and my stepfather was, was the District Police Commissioner. They, they called them uD.A., no ... |
| MN | District Assistant? |
| RN | Police officers sort of... |
| MN | He was a policeman? |
| RN | For the district, under the District Commissioner |
| MN | Okay |
| RN | Yes |
| MN | So he was in that department? |

³ A type of vocational secondary school for African children



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| RN | Yes, so when...in 1977 thereabout, things were not good in the communities. People would point fingers at each other. "She is married to someone who works for the Rhodesian government, she is a sell-out" et cetera, et cetera. And that was how she was labeled. And when these girls left the area, my mother was identified amongst other people who were supposed to be killed |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | You didn't tell us at the beginning where, which part of the country you came from? |
| RN | Okay, I came from Gwanda. A place called Nhwali, an area, a small area called Stakeng |
| MN | Okay, but in the Nhwali area? |
| RN | Yes, Nhwali is a school, it's our school but areas surrounding Nhwali school, my area is called Stakeng. It is a Sotho speaking area. Yes. |
| MN | And did you leave partly because you were afraid that your mother was going to be targeted? Or... |
| RN | No, when I left my mother was here in Bulawayo. I, I was here in Bulawayo because I had come to collect school fees from ... I was in Gwanda and my mother was here. I came to collect school fees from her. And I went to my uncle who was a police officer at Western Commonage camp. When I was there, a letter came from home that Regina should not come home. <i>Abafana bathatha abantu; amalwa ecatsha abuthile abantu ekhaya</i> [trans: the boys are taking people; the guerrillas have taken people from their homes] – freedom fighters have taken all the children at home. So she should not come home. Little did they know I was also interested [laughter]. To be honest with you, I, I stole money from my uncle. And I told him I was writing a letter to my mother. Instead, when I got to the bus terminus, <i>eRenkini</i> , I boarded the bus. When I arrived at Nhwali Business Centre, my mother was at the bus stop, waiting for the bus. To...she, she had gone home. I didn't know she was at home. And she was coming this way. She said, oh <i>ungasahambi ngekhaya, bayathatha kuthwe</i> [trans: don't go home they are taking people] – they would make some announcements through their party structures. ZAPU freedom fighters would announce through their party structures that today anyone who wants to go should go at such and such a point. So my mother was telling me the information that I ... |
| MN | She knew you wanted to go? |
| RN | She didn't know. |
| MN | Oh, so she didn't know? |
| RN | She was very conservative. Being the only child in her life so she didn't want to part with me. I said, okay, I am thirsty. There was Mgwale. There is a river that always flows. I said, " I want to go and drink water there, with my friends. I am coming back. I am not going home – <i>angifuni ukuhamba eZambia</i> [trans: I don't want to go to Zambia] – I will come back". Little did she know that was the last [laughter] time for her to see me. We then sneaked. My mother boarded the bus and came back, hoping I would follow. With the little money I had, |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| | we managed to buy some tennis shoes. I bought tennis shoes for my two cousins, Sphiwe and Dixon. So from our family, that very same day, the three of us left together. |
| MN | And did you imagine you were going for military training? To actually fight? |
| RN | I didn't. |
| MN | Or what did you think? |
| RN | We were, we were, we were attracted through radio. They called radio ...where there was a, a Johnny Mdingi, Johnny Mbedzi... |
| MN | Mbedzi, yeah... |
| RN | Yes, and the, the female broadcaster was Keneni Mabanga. It was illegal to listen to that short-wave but there were these attractive and informative announcements. <i>Buyani abantu lonke abafuna isikolo, abufuna ukufunda, buyani eZambia</i> .[trans: come all people who want to go to school, who want to learn, come to Zambia] So on my own, I knew I wanted to go to school, I wanted to be someone else. I used to tell my teacher that when I grow up, I want to be an air hostess. And when I heard that, I thought I was going to be an air hostess [laughter]. It was called Radio Propaganda. It was short-wave something something. Yes. That was the only thing that hooked me, yes. And when seeing the guerrillas, I thought it was the males' thing. And for the elderly people, not for us. Yes. |
| MN | And your cousin? One of them was a boy? |
| RN | The, the, the one of them who was a boy wanted to be a driver. |
| MN | I see. And what happened to him? Did he go into the military? |
| RN | No, they were younger than me. |
| MN | Oh, so they went to school? |
| RN | Yes, we were fortunate to come back as a family. Yes. We were fortunate to come back as a family. Unfortunately my cousin Sphiwe passed away in 1995. |
| MN | Okay. But when you came back, you, you had written O'Level? |
| RN | No. |
| MN | You hadn't written O'Level? |
| RN | Yes. |
| MN | So you went back to school? |
| RN | Yes. I wrote my O'Level here in Zimbabwe. No, what happened with me, I ...I was not very good at school. I had skipped, I don't remember which form, by the way. I had managed to write my O'Levels in Zambia. I didn't do well. |
| MN | Okay. |
| RN | And then when I came back here I was supposed to start at Form Two but unfortunately I fell pregnant [laughter] |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| MN | Oh okay. So you didn't go back to school? |
| RN | Ja. I fell pregnant. But I had already registered. I was already at... there is this school where we were taken to... |
| MN | Fatima? |
| RN | Fatima Mission. Yes. So, I was vetted from Fatima that no, you don't look good. You seem to have disobeyed [laughter]. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. Anything else you want to say about Victory Camp or your experience? |
| RN | Like I said, that during the days it was tough and we ... I was regretting why, really I went there. When situations were tough and the military raids. You know, for the first time when I saw a jet plane, attempting to kill, us. It was a gathering where the Education Minister for ZAPU, Cephass Msipa, had come to the camp. Like I said, I am known as Regina Msipa, that's my father's surname. Unfortunately he died at a ...when I was still young. I didn't manage to get a birth certificate using his surname. My mother then registered me in her name as Regina Ndlovu. So the camp commander introduced me to Cephass Msipa and he was walking hand by hand with me, enjoying and I was enjoying being close to, you know, famous people. And, unfortunately he wanted to know more about me, I didn't know, I didn't know most of my father's relatives. I only know, I knew that I was Msipa. So he was trying to find out who were these Msipass. I want to know. I only knew that they were from Mberengwa. You know. That's what I told him. And when we were still walking like that, there were some jet planes. He said to me, " <i>ko mwanawangu ndiwande kupiko?</i> [trans: my child, where can I hide?] Where should I hide?" There I was gone. I was nowhere near him because I was trained how to get down, roll and hide. |
| MN | He didn't know? |
| RN | He didn't know [laughter]. And that is how we parted. I didn't see him from that day. I only see him on television. Yes. And... |
| MN | So what happened? The planes, they, they didn't come? |
| RN | There was tight security personnel surrounding the camp, very strong weapons. We only knew them as ostrela, it is a gun... |
| MN | Okay, strela, yes |
| RN | ... that would follow the sound of the plane. And the plane was hit and it fell somewhere, I don't know where. In some farms... |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | Ja |
| MN | Okay. Did you see it hit? |
| RN | Yes. It was flashing the red light like this. Ja. It was hit really. We were watching it and, but we were like hiding, flat on the ground. Yes, and... My, my worry now, it's I don't hear more about us. We were, we were not given an opportunity to then share our experience on a larger scale back home. We have since forgotten each other and forgotten a lot of things. |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|---|
| | We need to tell our children stories about ourselves but I cannot remember all of it alone. I might remember something and something add on it et cetera et cetera, like that |
| MN | So this project maybe will help you to tell the story. |
| RN | Yes, yes. We need our children to know more about us, although I always tell them about myself. And they will, they are lucky such that their father too was a freedom fighter. Yes. |
| MN | Okay. Right, I think maybe we can end there? |
| RN | Ja |
| MN | Unless there is something else you have forgotten, otherwise... |
| RN | What I want to say really is, I only got pained because I lost most of my peers at Mkushi. Yes, those that I hoped would be together with me today. We have been together during our early childhood up to the time we were in Zambia. But every time when I meet with their parents, they always admire and weep to say, "Regina only if...uMiriam e oTsweneyo were there, <i>ngabelabo sebekhulile njengawe</i> [trans: they would be grown up just like you], maybe <i>ngabe sebesizalele abantwana njengawe osuzalele umama wakho abantwana bakho</i> [they would have had grandchildren for us just like what you have done for your mother]. And when my mother was still there, they would also meet with her, " <i>uwena ulenhlahla</i> , [you are lucky] Regina came back, <i>usekuzalele abazakulu</i> ." [she has borne you grandchildren] You know, that part to me, I think I will not forget. Yes, because I really feel bad when I go back home and meet some of my relatives who lost their children in the liberation struggle. They always remind me of them. They always remind me of them. And... Something that I wanted to tell you, we had shortage of books. What we would do, we would copy a text book into an, a ... what do we call this... |
| MN | An exercise book? |
| RN | Yes. To, to, to turn it to a text book. And the, our teachers were very good. Our teachers were very good. I remember the other time, with a group of my colleagues, we each copied the whole "Student Companion" and I still have it today. |
| MN | And you still remember it, I am sure. |
| RN | I still remember it. My children are using it. |
| MN | Oh? |
| RN | My exercise books, some of them were there up until last year. When my daughter was doing map reading, I said I was good at that. Geography was my subject, here is my exercise book. Check. We would make sure we remove things from the text books as they were. And in Geography we were given this picture of ZAPU being the government and sharing the provinces. We did not have these tribal provinces. It would be North, East, West province, Southern province, Eastern province and I had a map, drawn a map of those provinces. Yes. And the last experience. One day, a colleague of mine took my, my, my... you know we did not have irons, at first. We would do our washing, and take our clothes, put them under our blankets. Make sure when you sleep, they, they are straightening. So my ... there was a special parade, my, my, my friend realized her uniform |



| Speaker | Dialogue |
|---------|--|
| | did not stretch well. She then took my uniform. I, we exchanged words and I had this slip of the tongue to say, " <i>ikalanga lotuvi</i> " [trans: Kalangas are shit]. Tell you what, that's when I learned hard that ZAPU did not tolerate any tribalism. I spent the whole day with a 10kg of sand in a kitbag as form of punishment. You ... we were not allowed to utter any tribalistic language whatsoever. That would be your worst punishment the whole day. Or you would be given exercises throughout, for a week for saying that. That's my experience. |
| MN | Okay. That's interesting. Ja. Okay, thanks very much, Regina. |
| RN | You are welcome. |

