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Name of Interviewer:	Mary Ndlovu (MN)
Name of interviewee/s:	Zephaniah Nkomo (ZN)
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#### TRANSCRIPTION

Speaker	Dialogue
MN	This is an interview with Zephaniah Nkomo who has agreed to be interviewed as part of the Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive Project. It's being conducted by Mary Ndlovu on behalf of SAHA and Mafela Trust. This interview is being conducted on November 30 2010 at Bulawayo
MN	Zephaniah first of all can you us a bit about how you came to join the struggle and what role you played?
ZN	<p>Thank you Mary. My name is Zephaniah Nkomo. My struggle name was Zwelibanzi Moyo. I joined ZAPU party in 1975 when I was in the Youth League at Magwegwe. In the course of that year I attended quite a number of ZAPU meetings where politics was being discussed and which reflected quite a lot of insecurity in the country and about our future lives. Having motivated in ZAPU politics I also got more energy from the lot of reading material that I had been exposed to, and that was a book written by a South African woman who used to be very vocal and showing a lot of anti-apartheid sentiments in support of the downtrodden people in Southern Africa, Helen Suzman. This lady inspired me very much to seek what I could ever get to see people receiving freedom.</p> <p>In October 1976 I left Rhodesia going to Zambia. I went straight to Botswana. When I arrived in Botswana I stayed for nearly one and a half months before proceeding to Zambia. It had started raining during that time, but let me say, on my way to Botswana having crossed the border, Zimbabwe border and Botswana towards Ramokgwebana, I had to wait for a train that would take me to Francistown. We had gathered being many. I</p>

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	<p>remember we had two girls and four boys. One of the girls happened to be my young sister from an extended family and her father was a ticket checker in the railways. And upon boarding the train at Ramokgwebana, he was moving from coach to coach checking tickets, and we had no tickets. Seeing him approaching me, I moved from my seat and took cover on another seat, trying to avoid him seeing me. Unfortunately he saw me and he started shouting and ... and even calling police that were there and to the attention of everybody who was in the train, refusing me to proceed and go to war. But I stood firm and challenged him and told him that I'm going to the war. Getting to Francistown I disembarked the train, escorted by Botswana police to the Francistown camp where I stayed there for almost one and a half months before proceeding to Zambia. That was in October ... November ... near the end of November, then we left for Zambia. We were received at the airport in Lusaka by Kelly Malaba, he's late now. We were taken to Nampundwe Camp, we reached there by night, we were taken to the reception where we were lined up and we were very hungry that day; we were given names, the war names, and also thrown to receive each a blanket. We were led to the barracks and it was raining heavily. We never slept because the barracks were full of water and this rain continued for the next three days and we managed to sleep. We get used .. we got used to it.</p> <p>I happened to ... I happened to stay at Nampundwe for almost three months before I was selected for training. I had been selected to go for further training in the ... in the security department but it had been arranged that before I could go for further training in the security I should also first go and attend some other courses which were of military nature near the Zambezi Valley at CGT 1 where I spent there for about a month doing a lot of military exercises and all kind of training in military warfare. I was moved then because I had been already identified for security and I was moved to join the security commander who was then there at Chinyunyu camp and this was Sam Madondo. We were given thorough training in intelligence, counter-intelligence and other more sophisticated training as relating to a network of intelligence operations. I then was sent back to Lusaka where I stayed for a short while at Makeni camp, then later again taken back to Chinyunyu camp in the Zambezi valley. We used to call it the Seven Gorges where we stayed. We were subjected to various drills, military drills, taking us to very sophisticated exercises, military exercises, and even going into long marches and even getting to the bush for military exercises that would train us how to engage in combat activities. We were also exposed to shooting range using various types of weapons.</p> <p>In 1977 I was taken back to Lusaka and I was attached to the Presidential Guard and this was to be based at Vice-President Chinamano, who was staying with the National Chairman, Samuel Munodawafa. We stayed at Kabulonga which was one of the suburbs in the outskirts of Lusaka. We ... I was kept there in charge of a unit, it was not only me alone but I was in charge of a unit, a security unit that was deployed to look after these properties and personnel of higher standing, as the Vice-President, and the National Chairman and other people who stayed there. A lot of things happened in the surrounding which involved us to take some precautions as relating to security in the area. I remember some time when the Rhodesian helicopters flew over our houses in the early morning of one Sunday, dropping pamphlets directly on the roofs of our homes, of our houses, and this indicated to us that we were known, yet we thought we were hiding.</p>

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	<p>Having stayed with the Presidency for some time, in 1978 I was also moved out and selected to go and do training in police work. We were taken to Lilayi<sup>1</sup> Police Academy and we were 27 of us to train as cadets. When we were addressed by the late Joshua Nkomo in taking up the the discipline at Lilayi he had said “You are going to be the first police officers to run an independent Zimbabwe”. We were so excited. We had to put all our effort in understanding what police work was all about. We graduated there after six months and we were posted back to various installations of the party. I was returned back to the premises where the Vice-President stayed, Chinamano and the National Chairman. Before I had been posted back, temporarily I had stayed at Makeni and I was in charge of the unit, the security unit that was based at Makeni.</p> <p>I remember carrying out some investigations on what had been reported to us of the Rhodesians using Zambian land rovers, painting them in the colours of Zambian land rovers and also using Zambian camouflage. I sneaked to one white man along the farmland and this man had a farm along Aaron Milner’s farm. I sneaked in, armed, and went to see what was happening in this farm, where I found the owner of the farm, a white man, busy spraying land rovers and also doing a lot of mechanical work. I did not shoot him, but my intention of coming there was to carry out reconnaissance and make sure whatever decision would follow was to be supported by what I saw. I was instructed to move out when he saw me, having entered without permission in his premises. Lucky I survived from his vicious dogs that I was told they will never be merciful to anything, but on that day they just looked at me and did nothing. This man, this white man had been seen on several times driving a red jaguar that would be seen as far as Solwezi camps, right at the border with Zaire where we had camps there. And once this jaguar is seen passing by, what would follow would be raids and we were sure this man was a Rhodesian operative. We reported these activities to our senior and I think he was disciplined. We never saw him again. That was...</p>
MN	Disciplined by who, the Zambians?
ZN	No he was disciplined by the freedom fighters. We never saw him again.
MN	OK
ZN	<p>And while I was still at Makeni, the ... the bombing that took place at Joshua Nkomo’s house. I was at Makeni that night. It happened around 11 p.m. The whole town, Lusaka, was shaking with vibrations from bombs, shelling, shooting, the sound was just unbearable. The following day we made our reconnaissance missions around Lusaka and some other suspected areas and we found and apprehended one suspect who confessed before us that he took part in Nkomo’s house bombing the previous night. I interrogated the man and he revealed astonishing information that they had come all the way from Rhodesia heavily armed, well equipped in a number of groups or units with specific tasks, and his task among other tasks was to capture him alive or dead. Some were to capture material, some were armed with bazookas, all sorts of weapons that were fired and used in Nkomo’s house attack. Having interrogated this man we reported him to Joshua Nkomo who came and also interviewed him. After interviewing him he advised us or instructed us to take him and surrender him to the Zambian authorities who we expected they will lock him up, but I don’t know whether this happened. We never saw this man again. This has been part of my activities at the rear.</p>

<sup>1</sup> A Zambian institution which trained for the Zambian police force.

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MN	So when .. the the attack on Nkomo's house was 78 or 79?
ZN	It was 1978
MN	78. Ok so then by the time we came to the ceasefire you were put in ... you were made responsible somehow for the reception of refugees returning home.
ZN	Yes, certainly.
MN	Why were you assigned to such a duty?
ZN	We were the first... upon the ceasefire period, that's 79, I was the first with a group of a few cadres in the National Security and Order department, that is NSO who were flown from Lusaka via Harare to Bulawayo. When we arrived in Bulawayo we were still to receive orders from the party, ZAPU, and I was selected to go to Luveve Reception Centre where a centre had been created to receive the thousands, or millions of people coming from exile.
MN	OK so these ... these people who were coming ... obviously there were military people but there were also refugees.
ZN	Yes, all those who came through this centre, whether they were military or civilians, were coming under the the the arrangement of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
MN	OK. And how were they transported then, how did they travel from Zambia?
ZN	Wagons were arranged, train wagons were arranged to pick them from Lusaka and and all of them dropped at Luveve <sup>2</sup> rail siding where buses had been hired to pick them from there to Luveve Reception Centre.
MN	OK Can you tell us what's happening now in this photograph?[4A-46-23]
ZN	Yes, the train has arrived at Luveve. You have a lot of parents that have come to see this arrival and also to identify their sons and daughters... some ... of course there was a great excitement and great expectations from both sides - those arriving and those waiting. Some had been waiting here for days and weeks. These trips were not a one-day trip. It was taking almost, it took almost if I can remember well, almost a full month; every after two days the train is coming.
MN	And the parents wouldn't know when ...
ZN	Yes, the parents wouldn't know when my child is coming and in which coach. I remember some of the children came and the parents were waiting here until the exercise was complete. The fact that there was war in the country and homes had been destroyed in the rural areas and parents, some of the parents were dead. These young people while they were in Zambia were ... in fact assumed a certain culture and a concept of life that they looked upon themselves as a family, and the parents that had been left ten, fifteen years ago were in in simple terms viewed as either they are dead or alive. There wasn't any certainty whether you'll find them alive.
MN	But most of these children on the train, they were from the ...the camps, the refugee camps in Zambia.
ZN	Yes, they were from the refugee camps
MN	So they wouldn't have been there, mostly they wouldn't have been there as long as ten

<sup>2</sup> A high density suburb of Bulawayo

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	years
ZN	No of course, three ... five years.
MN	And then these buses are lined up here, what were the buses
ZN	The buses are lined up to pick those who had ... in fact the coming of all these people were not only people coming from refugee camps. It included people who had gone to Zambia during the Federation, who were Zimbabweans living in exile. So all these people decided now to come back home, so some of these people were in contact with their families in the rural areas and they knew their homes were there, so these buses were made available to pick them up and transport them to their ...
MN	Some of them were going to rural areas.
ZN	Some were going to the rural areas, some were going to the country, the bus terminus.
MN	OK. Then let's look at this one. [4A-46-24]
ZN	Yes, this is an excited group of young girls peeping through the windows of the train as it arrived. Some were reluctant.
MN	They look worried
ZN	Yes they look worried and some were even reluctant to to get out of the train; they are not sure, they are still searching for known faces to them in case they might identify their ... their relatives.
MN	Or they might not find any relatives.
ZN	It's an excitement, it's a mixed excitement.
MN	Here we've got a bus arriving, by the looks of things.[1D-83-03]
ZN	Yes, this is a busload of the arrivals from the railway siding. They are taken to Luveve Reception Centre, where large crowds of people are waiting. Everybody's waving a hand signalling happiness, not necessarily to any arrival known to them, but to everybody. So there were really signs of joy, as I earlier on said, these people would be here for weeks and months, some going to their houses to eat and coming back, sleeping here, night and day.
MN	And some of them were waiting at the railway station, some were waiting at the reception.
ZN	Yes, some at the railway station, some at the reception, some even coming to the offices. I happened to be at the reception centre carrying out the administrative work, the issuing out passes to these arrivals, passes that would enable them to go to their homes safely, not being suspected of anything, neither as criminals or anything.
MN	OK so this is the reception centre [1A-31-14]
ZN	Yes, the Luveve Reception Centre.
MN	Where you were working
ZN	Where I've been working. I happened to be assigned to this job from the ZAPU office headquarters based in Bulawayo. Upon taking up the job I was engaged by three ministries that were in charge of this exercise, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, and the ... no it's the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, the two of them.
MN	OK

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ZN	I did not even use my correct credentials.
MN	You were still using your war name
ZN	I used my ...another war name. I was even known as Ncube here.
MN	Why, why did you pick another name now?
ZN	We... we were not really sure and confident of how these people were going to treat these young people as they arrived
MN	Were they arriving before Independence or after Independence Day?
ZN	Before Independence.
MN	Before the Independence Day
ZN	Before the Independence Day. So my work, my job description here was to issue receipts, in fact pass receipts to each and every arrival and all those who were going to their homes in the rural areas, as a form of identity. All these people had no IDs, no birth certificates so it would be easy for them whenever they get to their respective districts to approach the the district office and ask whether they can be assisted to get IDs or birth certificates, proof ... in the proof of these passes that were ...
MN	So you were actually giving them documentation
ZN	Yes, I was giving them documentation
MN	But it was up to them to say where they wanted to go
ZN	Yes, they were free to go wherever they wanted to go
MN	And did you provide or was somebody providing transportation, would they get vouchers for the bus or..
ZN	They were getting vouchers for the buses and more so these documents were just as good as free passport documents
MN	And did they sleep here. How long did they stay here? Was there accommodation for them?
ZN	Yes, there was enough accommodation here and food was being prepared for them, tents had been erected here and those who were to be identified for for for going back to school, because some of these young people had come from Zambia, they were still learning and there was a need for them to continue their study work so schools were being prepared at Majoda that's in Tsholotsho <sup>3</sup> and other one in .. what do you call this ... St Luke's
MN	Lupane, Lupane
ZN	Yes, it's somewhere in Lupane
MN	It's Fatima
ZN	Yes, Fatima Mission. So a lot of them went there and some other girls were taken to Castle Arms. The other lot were given to the local people, local residents in Bulawayo. It had been arranged earlier in 1979, before Independence that a large number of homeless people were coming from exile and the party raised money and bought homes so that

<sup>3</sup> In fact the Majoda school later developed at West Nicholson and became known as JZ Moyo school

Speaker	Dialogue
	when these people arrived they would be looked after, so we shared this responsibility with the local people. Around Bulawayo and other ... and other towns whenever these people went back to their homes and found their homes burnt down and also relatives killed, the ZAPU people, those in that locality, would look after those children
MN	Can you just translate the banner there for people who don't know the language?
ZN	The banner at Luveve read " <i>Amhlophe, Libuyile Ekhaya</i> ". "We are grateful for your coming back home". Luveve Reception Centre, you are being received here.
MN	This is a rather touching scene. Can you say what's going on here? [4A – 44-28]
ZN	Yes, in many occasions it happened. Families were there, the arriving people, young girls and boys were there, some were lucky to identify their parents. The parent had identified her daughter, really tears of joy.
MN	Even this girl behind looks like she might be crying
ZN	<p>Yes, the girl behind is crying also, seeing "yes my colleague has located .. has been identified or has identified the parents - where are mine? Probably they're all dead or I'll never see them again". I remember at one time when parents came to ZAPU office as is ... normally in the African custom when death has struck a home people get to a symbol that signifies that death has struck the home by wearing black clothes. They visited the office in that attire and they were coming to find out "Could we be guided as to whether we can find the grave because we have been informed our child died". While they were seated in the chairs in the ZAPU office the child arrived, happy, smiling and crying, you can imagine what really happened. These were things that we encountered in the eve and the after eve of our Independence.</p> <p>These are boys carrying their luggage [1E-56-03] and these boys, truly they may not be coming from the same home or the same district, but they had become brothers, true brothers. They are at Luveve here, they are getting ready to board buses that will take them to various places throughout the country</p>
MN	It seems some of them came with quite a bit of luggage considering they had been in a refugee camp.
ZN	Our refugee camps in Zambia and elsewhere were being looked after very well. Clothes were being provided, blankets, it was really to make somebody stable and tuned to taking up the challenges and more the challenge to these young people was education so they really were for education and they needed to be looked after and exactly, ZAPU did that.
MN	Then the other category of people who were received before Independence and some after I suppose, were those who were disabled, wounded or permanently disabled by the war. [1A-31-06]
ZN	The disabled people who were in the .. who were in exile as well came by train. Some were already at home in the assembly points, and these also moved to where designated areas for disabled people were located, and one was Ntabazinduna. Later it became Lido <sup>4</sup> . While they were in Zambia they were ... they were staying in Makeni, some of them, Kafue, and many of those who got injured after the bombardments also were moved to Makeni where they received treatment. These came home. Since they were freedom

<sup>4</sup> A property in Bulawayo , a former hotel, bought by ZAPU to accommodate their disabled ex-combatants

Speaker	Dialogue
	fighters, they were also accorded the opportunity to demobilize while they were in those camps where they were ... they had been sent to live. This is Ntabazinduna...
MN	And what happened to them, was there any medical treatment, any compensation given to these injured people?
ZN	Yes, there was some compensation, which they still continue to be receiving. And also some kind of treatment. Unfortunately there wasn't much treatment given to them in terms of the degree of their injury. Some needed to be, to undergo operations, surgical operations which they, they, they could not. While such thinking was coming up to see whether these people could be assisted in a bigger way, then started the .. the conflict in the country <sup>5</sup> . We have some people who were injured again as disabled after Independence where they were being given shelter, being looked after when the outbreak of violence started in 1982, 81-82. These people were caught, some of them were caught.
MN	Did they get, for example, this man here obviously has lost a leg or part of a leg .. did these people eventually get fitted with artificial limbs?
ZN	No, not at all. Those who happened to have got some artificial legs or artificial limbs only got them while they were out in Zambia. Some of them were bombed or injured and shot, got injured, they were sent overseas to get some assistance, medical assistance, and some of them got some artificial limbs. But here, none got anything. .
MN	Up to now?
ZN	Up to now, I've never known anybody who got anything. We have some that I know even today that have bullets in their bodies, not removed
MN	So just to wind up, can you summarise your experience receiving these .. these people home again, the disabled, the refugees, all of them. Did you feel good that you were able to receive them, or was it depressing ...how did you feel about it?
ZN	Certainly it was a good reception, when receiving these people coming from exile. Some shed tears just to step on the Zimbabwean soil. We achieved what we wanted to achieve - the independence, the black African majority rule. What came after may not have served the interests of the not yet planned activities. We were happy that we had come back home; we were happy that we were going to meet our parents, our relatives . Unfortunately we did not come back in the numbers that we expected to see. Some of us died during the struggle.
MN	OK thank you very much
ZN	Thank you.

<sup>5</sup> Reference is to the fighting which broke out between ZANLA and ZPRA in Entumbane in Bulawayo in 1980 and 81, as well as the Gukurahundi massacres.