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

MN	<p>This is an interview with Precious Nleya who has agreed to be interviewed as part of the Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archives Project. The interview is being conducted by Mary Ndlovu and Zephaniah Nkomo on behalf of SAHA and Mafela Trust. This interview is being conducted on November 16 at Bulawayo</p> <p>Precious, perhaps to start you could just explain to us a little bit about yourself; how did you get involved with ZAPU, and what led you to be present at Francistown?</p>
PN	<p>I am Precious Nleya, born in 1962; I attended school here in Bulawayo. At the age of fourteen, fourteen – fifteen, we met up with freedom fighters who then recruited us to ... to join the armed struggle; that was in 1976. It was during the school holidays. So they walked us across to Francistown. Before we got to the camp there was some place where we waited and from that place - I can't remember the name of the place though - where we waited and we were picked up by trucks to the camp, Francistown transit camp. We stayed there for.. we didn't stay there for a long time. We stayed maybe for a week or so. And then we boarded a plane to Zambia to do our military training. When we got to the plane - boy we thought we were ... we were going places - we didn't know what they had in store for us. We got to to Zambia and then we were taken to Nampundu [Nampundwe] transit camp. We stayed there a week and then I went for training at Mwembeshi training centre. We were</p>



	the last group of girls to train with boys, with men. After training then I, I... we were taken to Victory Camp. We stayed there for some time. Some of the girls from our group were ... were picked to go and train with ladies at Mkushi and we... I remained in Francistown for some time and then we were taken to some college where we were trained by some Zimbabweans and Cubans for counter-intelligence. We did our training, we did our training... we did our intelligence training, for ... it was close to a month and then we went back to ... to Victory Camp and our commanders were preparing our papers that we will go to Francistown and other refugee camps. We were actually deployed in different camps. Yes, I think that's how ... that's about me and ZPRA.
MN	O.K. So you were deployed to Francistown camp, with a mission.
PN	Yes
MN	What was your mission there?
PN	As the struggle intensified the Rhodesian Fronts were infiltrating spies to spy on us ... how we were doing things, and how we were getting along, and how we were doing, you know the weapons we were using, how our camps were established and so on. So these people were ... were joining our camps as part of us, as cadres, as recruits you see, and then they would go up the ladder and you would find at times our camps were ... you know ... were like they were known to the enemy on attacks, so after realising that maybe the enemy operatives found out that was another way of the people getting into us, so we were deployed in the camps. So I came back to Francistown on a mission this time, not as a cadre, a recruit.
MN	So let's look at some of these photographs then. This first one,[4A-80-02] what ... what was likely happening there. Can you talk about what was going on here?
PN	This was.... I think this photograph, it was lunchtime. You see men carrying food, plates of food. It was during the day, it was lunchtime. This is Francistown. This small hill - mountain sort of - it was on the right side. It was on the right side of the camp..., as you were driving in it was on the right. And on the left was the International Red Cross clinic where the recruits ...where the recruits were attended to medically. This here is lunchtime, I see this guy is worried; they they always remained in suspense thinking " Maybe today we're going, today we're going", they never got ... they never had the proper days when they would be going for training, and everybody was looking forward to going to Zambia, flying to go to do their military training, and coming back and revenging you know. So they're always waiting you know
MN	How long did they mostly stay in Francistown?
PN	Oh, they... then this time you know it was about 1978-79, it was a bit slowing down, but before, it was maybe twice a week, once a week, but thereafter you know it was during those talks and everyone was expecting that the talks will yield something, some ceasefire or something, so it was a bit slowing down, maybe once or twice a month, but then they would be picked and taken to the airport, and ...
MN	So some of them didn't stay very long.
PN	Yes some of them
ZN	But generally life, how was it in the camps?
PN	No. It was okay, It's like these people, these people were not fools to join the struggle. They had come from homes due to pressure which was mounting within the country, and so they were ... they fled; some had their homes burnt down, some had their parents, brothers and sisters killed so they just left the country to join the struggle. So some were, some, were...



	you find some really wanted to go and take up arms but some had nowhere to stay. They really needed some refuge. Yes.
MN	But the people in this photograph,[4A – 80 – 02] they seem to be all men. In that particular photograph. Were there mostly men in Francistown camp or were there also girls and ...
PN	Yes, there were. There were both. Ladies were there, girls were there and ... but as the war intensified these people came in numbers and as they came in numbers more camps ... the government of Botswana then opened more camps . There was another camp in Dukwe, Dukwe and there was another camp in Selibe Phikwe, yes. And mainly in Dukwe you know they would ... they would accommodate ladies, like when some had their homes burnt down and where they had nowhere to stay and the entire family had to move ... so they would take those people especially those who were not ... who were elderly and who could not go and train and fight and come home and fight. And some were very young, some were maybe though a bit older, they could not go and train and come back home, so some were taken to such camps and those who were taken to ... who remained in Francistown were those who would ...who are on the waiting list of going to Zambia for training. Yes, maybe that's why here you're seeing males mainly because the ladies were few. I think there was just one barrack of girls. Of ladies, yes
MN	And we found that quite a few of the girls when they were got to Zambia, they were pregnant. And in Zambia in Victory Camp there were quite a few girls and young women who had delivered babies. And we were wondering now, where did these babies come from?[1G – 9 – 13] Did they get them on the way to Francistown, to Botswana, or were there problems in the camp in Francistown that led to pregnancies. What was the position of these girls?
PN	Um ... in Francistown like there was a division like a boarding school. You know the set-up was like a boarding school where, males remained the other side and the females remained the other side. But these people had run away from a situation at home where young ladies were raped even by the Rhodesian forces. Yes. And even on our side, the indiscipline creeps anywhere, but some of these girls had run away from these things and they did not know anything about contraceptives, and then there were no condoms, so they... and they had no choice. The Security Forces, the police officers, the soldiers, the Zimbabwean soldiers - the Rhodesian soldiers - they would harass them and you know abuse them, rape them and they would ... you know the pregnancy takes nine months, and then by the time they get to Victory Camp they're almost due.
MN	Yes, but what about ...
PN	They really didn't stay a long time with the freedom fighters. They only helped them cross, they only took them across to Francistown transit camp and then they were flown to Zambia and when they got there they have children.
MN	But what about with the guerrillas on the journey. How would these journeys take place when they were travelling ... when they decided to go now to the struggle, and they were escorted by guerrillas.
PN	Like in our case I think I was the youngest I was the youngest in our group ... uh, they they really were brotherly, they were fatherly... and like they they really had pity on us. I remember as you travel it's a long .. I fell down and they gave me <i>umhiqho</i> ... I don't know whether you know <i>umhiqho</i> that ...it was like sour porridge; it's like you know when they are making beer before the separation, before the process is over there's this sour porridge, so that's what they gave me on the way and they carried me on the way when I was tired. They



	were really brotherly ... but I can't rule out some cases, because indiscipline is everywhere. Yes, I can't say even on our brothers, because they really took their position as brothers. That's why we called them <i>obhudi</i> , brothers because they really took that place.
MN	And you travelled by foot then, in fact most people travelled by foot
PN	Yes, we walked, we walked to Francistown, and when we got to a certain point in Francistown where we were picked by United Nations Council for Refugees ... I don't know ... lorries that took us to, to Francistown camp
ZN	The aspect of security in these camps.
PN	Sorry?
ZN	How was security maintained in these camps?
PN	In the camps. Like in Francistown it was a refugee camp, a refugee camp in Botswana and the Botswana ... the Botswana Defence Forces – BDF - they maintained security there, and we were given food supplies by the United Nations. In Francistown they ... they took it that it was a refugee camp, a refugee camp - non trained personnel.
MN	But you were, you were there as a trained person - with a mission.
PN	Under cover, yes. They didn't know we were there.
MN	O.k. but then when you got people like this - how did you go about looking for the spies or identifying people who might be spies?
PN	Some ..in some instances, like you know when you and me know each other and one place or the other we'll meet and talk at a corner, you know, and when we talk we'll be checking who is listening and who is ... who is looking at us, you know ... you know you do some things that would make people suspect, and then we'd pick on those people and interview them.
MN	O.K. I notice you say interview, not interrogate.
PN	[ laughter ] I'll try to put it right
MN	O.K. and then if you found you suspected one what did you do with them?
PN	We just...
MN	They still went to Zambia, but you alerted the people there?
PN	Yes. What ... we would just say and then we... you know you second why you're suspecting them, whether you have talked to them and after talking, after the interview what did you get from them, and then you give it to the next man in line and then it would be up to them whether they put them aside or they, they take them somewhere else.
ZN	O.K. and probably ... Can you shed light on the co-operation of the Botswana government in this kind of exercise or this kind of activities. How was it?
PN	It was ... the Botswana government was good, it was good. We didn't interfere with them really, we stayed in a camp. We were not there, they were not there; they were not allowed to go out. They stayed in a camp, they didn't interfere with our activities, they were highly co-operative because they would even organise some social matches, like the boys were playing with the Botswana police and they would have a soccer match; maybe the BDF would come once in a while, they would organise such activities; I think it was good. The support we got was just good, yes.
MN	What ...was there, you talked about some activities, but I suppose quite a bit of the time people were just sitting. What was happening here, were they sleeping outside or were they just relaxing [4A – 80 – 13]
PN	As I said earlier on, as the war intensified these people were coming in numbers; it doubled up, and the accommodation was limited. We... they only had a few blocks, a few blocks of



	barracks, and at times they would pitch... there were few tents pitched so that to be used as accommodation but when ...when they were not taken to Zambia the number kept swelling up and you can't say "No [inaudible] just stop we are still waiting for these to be transported to Lusaka". No, they kept coming they kept coming and accommodation was a bit
MN	So they were sleeping outside...
PN	Yes, they would sleep outside, in some instances they would.
ZN	o.k. You were saying ... them sleeping out ...
MN	Yes, were ....
PN	Mosquitoes are seasonal, they're not always there. And these people were not always sleeping out; but when ...whatever happened to people, there was a clinic there. International Red Cross had a clinic there which attended to such cases and at times they were provided with mosquito repellent and mosquito coils from the ... by the Red Cross and the what do you call this the..
ZN	the UNHCR
PN	Yes
MN	And then comes the big day to go on the plane [4A – 90 – 09]
PN	Yes, and everybody's excited, they all want to know where they're going.
MN	What do you think .. were they excited, were they scared?
PN	No, no they were not. Like in my case I was excited I was...
MN	First time on a plane?
PN	Yes, it was the first time on a plane and I thought "Wow"
MN	You weren't worried that maybe this is a trap and they were taking you back to Rhodesia?
PN	No I don't know what happened. No, no ... I didn't, I didn't think that way no; there was ... It would be maybe cheaper if they... if when taking us back they would take us in lorries or buses or something else. I didn't think ... I was thinking maybe now I'm going to the Soviet Union
MN	What did you imagine was waiting at the other end of this plane ride?
PN	Training, but I didn't know it was that tough.
MN	It was tough?
PN	Oh it was, it was really tough, especially with us sure... it was, they handled us like men [laughs]
MN	And the men, they were also excited, I mean all the people in this picture are excited?
PN	Like in this other photo you see they like they worried... they ... like this one, you see this one here in the photograph, like he's waiting. You would not be told when you're going, you'd just see the lorry standing there and they would just call the names, "Jump in the truck. You're going to Zambia!" Oh everybody would be... you know, and then when the last truck trip... the trip goes, and then you remained and you don't know ... and you were thinking that I'm next and I'm next, and it doesn't come - your day doesn't come, you'd think "Oh my god, when am I going?"
ZN	You say in training you were treated like men. Say exactly how you were treated
PN	The endurance training was very tough. It was really tough. It was not a lady training, that.
MN	What did you do in your endurance training?
PN	Oh dear, I don't know how many kilometres we would run - over, down, up the gorges, the mountains and carrying your food and your stuff, everything, your gun ... it was quite something.



MN	This was at Mwembeshi?
PN	Sorry?
MN	At Mwembeshi.
PN	At Mwembeshi, yes even at Nampundu that's where the hell broke loose.. those guys [laughs]
MN	Did ... did you stay then in Francistown until the war ended?
PN	Yes
MN	So that was your main ... your main experience after training was at Francistown?
PN	Yes, yes
MN	And what do you say now many years later, about that experience, the whole experience of going to ..... training and ...
PN	It was an effort, that. Ah I don't know, just wasted effort, we fought, now here we are, what are we doing?
ZN	The last ... your last days in Francistown when the raids were at their height ... also Francistown was also raided and I believe you may shed light ... shed light on the capturing that took place there and what really happened.
PN	Like when, when we got to Francistown we were working with the representative, the ambassador Mr Tlou, Mike, yes, that's where we reported O.K. that's where we reported; whatever our findings within the camp we would pass the information to him in the Zimbabwe House so we would go to the Zimbabwe House with the Red Cross nurses . We had, we had ... within the recruits that we trusted there were qualified nurses, some registered, general nurses, some state certified within, whatever. So they would work in the Red Cross clinic, assisting. So once in a while they would go to town, maybe weekly, maybe twice a week, maybe daily. The ambulance would take them to town ...what, I don't know for whatever errands... so we would go with them, drop by the Zimbabwe House, do our activities. At times we would sleep over there, at times we would stay for a week or so and when we came from Zambia we started off staying with the ... with the representative in Francistown in town in the offices and then we would work with him from there, but then after finding that No, we were supposed to be within these people, so we can get whatever we want, we moved from the office to the camp. So we would just ...you know, between going and coming, going and coming. The fateful day when they ... when Zimbabwe House was raided and people kidnapped, I had spent the whole day there and in the evening... I went to the camp and next morning it was in the news that the Zimbabwe House was raided and everybody there taken. And I'm sure they had even targeted it because the ... the freedom fighters wanted some supplies some things ... they would get to the Zimbabwe House, wait for whatever they wait for. At times they would be going to Zambia for medical treatment, maybe those wounded in the front they would go there, wait there and taken; so maybe because of that it was targeted and maybe because of the information as well, it was targeted and it was raided and other guys were captured and I survived.
MN	They were still alive in 1980?
PN	Some of them. Some I never, I never came to see them when we came home. Some I saw.
MN	But the camp itself where you were ... were ultimately based it wasn't attacked?
PN	No it wasn't, the camp ... the camp was not attacked ... because they're not sure if they're refugees, and Zimbabwe House had some trained personnel. Yes, maybe that's why then it was targeted by the Rhodesian Front because I'm sure .... because of ... I don't know ... the Acts of the refugees and it being taken care of by the United Nations Refugee Council.



	Maybe then they did not go as far as the camps
MN	But your whole experience ... now you're saying you wonder if you wasted your time because we haven't really gained much. But as personal experience, did you benefit from that or you also wasted your own time?
PN	No, in everything we encounter in life you learn something; after every situation you come through, you know you learn... every encounter you learn, every encounter you learn. So I just ... I can't say really it was totally a waste of time ... I wouldn't be sitting here with you
MN	What did you do after you came home?
PN	No when we came home I did some secretarial courses and I got employed ... helping myself here and there....
MN	Thanks very much Precious, this has been an interesting interview

