



# Interview with Abram Motsusi

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Tshepo Moloi [TM]: *Rre Mogolo* please tell us about yourself: who are you are and where you were when the fighting started?

Motsusi Abram [MA]: The fighting?

TM: Yes

MA: The fighting here in Zeerust?

TM: Yes

Other: Let me explain what we are going to do. You see this young man in front of you?

MA: Yes

Other: He is going to listen to your story and put it together. You start by saying who you are, where you were born, who your parents are, when you started staying in Lekubu and so on.

TM: Is it true that you were fighting for this land, *Rra Mogolo*?

MA: Yes

TM: So what we would like to know is what the reason for fighting for this land was. So I need you to explain to me where this land come from, who started staying here and when. Tell me what you remember

MA: I cannot hear him. What is he saying/

Other: He said he would like you to start with the beginning of your story. Just as you are: Abram Motsusi. When you built a house here in Lekubu. When did the fighting start to your memory as you have been telling him?

MA: The story of the land?

Other: Yes

MA: I was born here in Lekubu. We built here in Lekubu. I am the child of *Rre Seruti*. Flit Seruti, Seruti Motsusi. *Mme* [mother, or elder woman in Setswana] I think was Maria. Maria Motsusi.

TM: You were born in 19-what?

MA: I'm Tswana. I don't know which year I was born in.

Other: He was born in 1937. You're the same age as Mosalanyana, right?

MA: Huh?

Other: You're the same age as Mosalanyana

MA: Yes

Other: You were born in 1937

MA Yes. The 2 of us are Mafatle.

TM: Oh, so your father is *Ranku* Motsusi

[TIMECODE – 02m:41s]

MA: Yes

Other: Then he has a twin called Manku who is married near *Rra Pulane*.

TM: Oh yes

MA: So about life here: being *Motswana* [a person of Setswana descent] I'm not sure which year my parents came here. We were born here and then they knew as *Matebele* [Setswana word for people of Ndebele descent]. In our culture, they say we are *Matebele*. *Matebele* that are darker skinned.

Other: Before you continue writing, *Rre Mogolo*, we are all *Matebele* this side of South Africa. We are, from where we come from, referred to as *Matebele*. They say we are people from *Motlala*. So, when I start to understand this thing of being called *Matebele*, they are Ndebele. We are not Ndebele, we are Swazi. We are from the people of Shongwe and Tongo wa Mavuso. That is where we are from, then.\* [translated from Zulu]. The Motsusi's are actually Swati. You see we are told by the books. When our parents came here, and they became Tswana, they changed their surname to "Motsusi" when actually it was "Mavuso".

TM: Oh!

Other: Do you understand?

TM: Oh! So now when they say you are *Matebele*, who said that?

MA: Those are the people. Baphurutse They say that we are and our fathers, our culture and our fathers, our spirit animal is the cow. Our spirit animal is the cow. So then the Baphurutse said that we - our spirit animal was the cow. These Baphurutse people know us by my father's aunt, who was *Tebele*. They were *Motebele* and *Motebejane*. *Motebele* said "I am *Kgosi* [Setswana word for king or headman] and I married a Mofurusi. *Motebele* then married a Mofurusi. That is how Baphurutse managed to say that were people of Motlale...

TM: Where do the Baphurutsei come from?

MA: Baphurutse?

TM: Yes

MA: They said they come from the places over there a place over there. They came over this side and over the grass, Baphurutse

TM: So then they decided to settle here?

MA: They came and settled here. They met with our grandparents who had come this side.

TM: The grandparents who came from where?

MA: The way our grandparents came here

TM: Where did they come from?

MA: They met here. On this side. On the home's this side.

TM: What is the name of this village?

[TIMECODE - 05m:44s]

Other: Leeuwfontein

TM: Leeuwfontein?

Other: Yes

MA: We have evidence of our grandparents that side. Even the land that was bought, was bought by our father, uncles and so on. They were all together. They were living here. There are some things left over from our fathers this side. They came here with *Rra* – the man you call Lokolaneng. They fought. They were fighting for the throne.

TM: The Lokoloane's?

MA: *Rra* Lokolaneng then came here. When they got here, there was a grandfather of ours who had built something over there! We built over there!

TM: Where is over there?

Other: At Rakedi's

TM: At Rakedi's, okay

MA: I don't know if it was him or Meshach.

Other: It was Kethe

MA: It was Kethe?

Other: Meshach was Kethe's son

MA: When they came from that side and come with *Rra* Lokoloane, they moved and bought this land here. He finally said that this man must leave and when you leave, you must build far away near Modiseng's. He said "you and I will meet here". Do you see right here?

TM: Yes

MA: It's Molapo. You will come from there and I will come from here and we will meet here, at Molapong's.

TM: At Molapo?

MA: By the river

TM: Yes

MA: So then they would say we're swimming. Then he would say "well then I am going to meet you there". These were the things we used to hear them talking about.

TM: So this land: how did they buy it, *Rre Mogolo*?

MA: *Rra*?

TM: How do they buy it?

MA: When they buy?

TM: How did they buy the land?

[TIMECODE – 07m:43s]

Other: How did they buy the land?

MA: This land, according to what I know, there were *Maburu* [Setswana word for White Afrikaans people] called –

Other: The first *Leburu* who was here almost as it...was Sonny boy.

MA: They were the people who said that they would stay there just for

Other: Yes, they would stay there just for...what I got about the way the land was bought

MA: Yes

Other: I wanted a piece of the land because this land was all Baphurutse's. *Boer* that side was the one who brought the fence this side.

MA: Matlomane!

Other: Matlomane, yes. When Matlomane brought his fence this side of the farm, it seemed as though he was following *ntatemogolo* [Setswana word for older man or grandfather] Ntebelele. He said, "Let's go after that man to put back his fence because it is right at our house. So then they followed him.

TM: Matlomane?

Other: Matlomane, yes. Matlomane then agreed with the old men that he would take his farm back but in return I will ask for cows. Remember that *Maburu* wanted anything in order for them to live. So these 2 old men agreed because they were herding them. So they took out 8 cows each and gave them to Matlomane who called his workers to push the farm back.

TM: What was Matlomane's name?

Other: What was that man's name! This was when we were still young, you know?

TM: Yes, there is no problem

Other: I remember that he was Sonny boy but I didn't remember his name

MA: Yes, his name was just Sonny boy. He was one of those *Maburu* who just took the land. Even now they have taken it. We are being helped by the government but when it comes to it and we are talking like we are now, that farm over there has actually fallen over to our side.

TM: Which? Matlomane's?

Other: Yes, it fell over to our side. From the time it was in Tswaneng, it had fallen onto our side

TM: And when was that, *Koko*? [Setswana word for grandmother or elderly woman]

Koko: It was last year

TM: Oh do you mean you put in a claim?

Koko: Yes, we put in a claim and put in that claim for a lot of land

MA: Huh?

[TIMECODE – 10m:18s]

Koko: We put in a claim for a lot of different land, *Rre Mogolo*. From those places where it was wild by the bottom farms

MA: There at Matlaneng?

Koko: Yes!

MA: That land was 221. Madikwe.

Koko: Ja!

MA: I used to live there

Koko: There are claims and the person who knows very well about these claims is Pupsey.

TM: So I will have to ask him?

Koko: You will ask him because he knows the history of how many farms we have and how many are left. But we have about 5 or 6 farms that have already been assigned to us.

TM: So, *Rra Mogolo* when you were growing up and the elders had already bought this land, how do you live? What is life like here?

Koko: He is asking if life now is the same as life was when we were growing up

MA: No, it's not the same, Mr Moloi. Life is very difficult now. That time when we stayed with our parents, life wasn't difficult. Right now things are difficult

TM: How did you live before?

MA: We lived really nicely. We didn't eat many things. Our parents would call us to eat. We ate *Morogo* [wild spinach] and we ate what they used to call Gooseberry.

Koko: Yes! And wild tomato.

MA: Yes, wild tomato. That is how we lived. There were dams here. When the cows would get into the water, so would you.

Koko: Yes, we used to drink with the cows

MA: Yes, you drink. Even as it gets into the water and defecates in it, you still drink the water.

TM: Wouldn't you get sick?

MA: No! We didn't get sick! Even tea, you know? We used to tear it into 3 and drink it.

Koko: Children didn't drink tea during the day

MA: Children don't drink tea during the day

MA: Even when it rained they had these pyjamas. They would call them Metobane. When a person died, they would be buried at 2

TM: During the day?

MA: 2 o'clock

[TIMECODE – 12m:58s]

Koko: In the afternoon

MA: They would go the cemetery. They were just men who would carry the coffin. After we finish there, we sit down and we are given pap

TM: in your hands?

Koko: In the hands yes

MA: Yes. They were would also be a spoon of *Morogo* with beans. We eat and once we are done, we wash our hands and leave. We leave and we are finished. These days life is very hard. Our children here live a very difficult life if you think about how we used to live compared to lives of today. You don't sleep. These days you just worry. When you speak to a child, their minds are elsewhere so you end up talking to yourself. My mothers and fathers did not have this problem because they used to hit their children. Children were hit. As children when we used to go over to the house just over there

Koko: We used to go already fed. Just here. That boy the other day we needed to call him to find out -

MA: We get there and we are given pap. The old lady sits there and says "Ja! We're eating". They make us worry because they dig our graves when they say they need R200. And then we don't greet people. They want a big bucket of African beer. They want all those things, they want bread. Tell me: all those things, if you have been here your whole life, where do you get them?

Koko: Where do you get them?

MA: You see we grew up not doing those things.

TM: Yes

MA: You see they are just playing with us. They know that when we get to the old lady's house when she has cooked, we are going to sit there and just eat altogether.

TM: What about school *Rra Mogolo*?

MA: Heh?

TM: At this time, were you attending school?

MA: I attended school then I dropped out and ran away because my teacher used to hit me a lot and tell me that I was very naughty. I ran away to herd cattle.

TM: Whose cattle?

MA: Yes, just like that

TM: Whose cattle was it?

MA: Heh?

TM: Whose cattle are you herding?

MA: The school I attended was just here. Just here

[TIMECODE - 15m:48s]

Koko: He's asking whose cattle you were herding. The ones at home?

MA: The ones at home. My father's.

TM: Oh so your father had cattle?

MA: Yes they were my father's.

TM: So you herded them until when?

MA: Until the day I was caught

TM: Oh. And how did they catch you, *Rra Mogolo*?

MA: They caught me in Zeerust. They caught me as they said the fighting was over, right?

Koko: Yes

MA: So we came back home. As we were back home, as I was trying to get to work in a factory, they caught me. Then they arrested me. I was arrested in Pretoria.

TM: Let us go back for a moment and find out how this fighting actually started. This fight that you are talking about. How did it begin? It started with the passes, right?

MA: Yes, it started with the passbooks.

TM: When did you hear about the passbooks? That you would be required to carry passbooks?

MA: So you know we were fighting so that women wouldn't have to carry passbooks?

TM: Ja

MA: We weren't sure or not if they would have a purpose. We said that women would not have to take passbooks. This fighting started with the passbooks. It turned out that there were people who were taking the books under-cover. Some people were secretly taking the passbooks without Morafe knowing. So when the white people came here, they came here because of the passbooks that you and your wife took and we didn't know that you took a passbook. That is how the conflict happened and then the conflict came here. That is how it started here in '55 and '56. When it got there it wanted to go into '57. It grew a lot and then we were caught in '58. And some even went to jail!

TM: What about these people who took the passes secretly? How did you know that they took passes secretly?

MA: So when you come back you are quiet. You know that when you come back you are quiet? We heard from *Maburu*. *Kgosi* did not know. So *Maburu* thought that these people who want their passbooks are being secretive. This is a secret that never finishes. If you try to hide a secret, it will eventually come out.

TM: When you heard, what did you do?

MA: Then we would fight with them to hear why they took the passbooks. Morafe knew but *Kgosi* didn't know.

TM: And what did they say?

[TIMECODE – 19m:00s]



MA: What do they say? They start to whine and call those *Maburu!* *Maburu* start by hitting us and so we get into their houses and we would torch them. And torch them we did, sir. Then we went to jail. There was a man who laid a case against me. I had torched his house. I went to jail in Pretoria. They said the year *Mona Mogolo* [Setswana word for old man] got into jail, Mandela that is when we got out in '59.

TM: Really?

MA: '59. That is when I was released from prison.

TM: So this idea to torch houses: where did that idea come from?

MA: It came from the place that we will know, right? We knew that there were some people who got their passbooks, right?

TM: Yes

MA: They know and *Kgosi* doesn't know. So you took your passbook and now you're bringing the white people to us because they also don't know what's happening. So the white people come and the next thing we know we can hear the *Sjambok* [whip-like weapon] hitting our mothers and fathers.

TM: They hit them?

MA: [exclaims]. Do you see where those taxis stop?

TM: Yes

MA: You see those taxis, right?

TM: Yes, I saw them

MA: We were older. We had grown up and we were older.

Koko: They were the same age as Tshepi

TM: Oh, about 16/17?

Koko: Ja

MA: *Maburu* come from there and they make us stand up. We don't go back. We pick up those rocks and as they try to shoot – you see this old man we are talking about?

TM: Yes. Who is it? Lekoloana?

Koko: Yes, that is Lekoloana

MA: This old man was strong. He died in jail. They hit him while I was with him in jail. *Maburu* Came with these pick-ups we used to call Nylon. When they tried to shoot with their guns, trying to shoot us, we would hit them with the rocks. That gun doesn't shoot water, doesn't shoot Marula

Koko: Yes, water came out

[TIMECODE – 21m:28s]

MA: Water. Water!

TM: The gun?

Koko: Yes!

MA: You don't know?

Koko: Ah! He doesn't know!

MA: This old man had placed a bowl of dirty water there that we were washing from. We were washing from that water. We don't know right? We think it's just water! Well it had medicine in it. As we standing there and *Maburu* came after we had washed, as they were trying to shoot us just water came out. Their guns refused to shoot

Koko: They refused to shoot

MA: They refused to shoot, yes. So we have got rocks. You see that rocks here are very hard, right?

TM: Yes

MA: They called us. But honestly we also called them! We were breaking pickups.

TM: And so there where you were, was it men and women or just men?

MA: Where?

TM: Where they were fighting

Koko: At the bus stop?

MA: No it was just men

TM: Just men?

MA: Yes!

Koko: The soldiers had their match

MA: Yes. After all we are soldiers of old men, right?

TM: Yes

MA: He wasn't there

TM: He wasn't there?

MA: No ways, but we did a job that could be noticed. You know he had a ritual that *Maburu* were so surprised at. He would cut the pant leg in the middle. He would cut the shirt arm. He would take the bag from the veg and wrap it around like so. He would combine it with that bag. Then he took the bag and he would cut a bit more off. White people would be told that he is the *Kgosi* and they would say no he's a mad man! They would say that they don't want this mad person. We tried to run but they caught us. This same old man, didn't want to do what the *Kgosi* did. They went to catch him using a spiritual healer with the white person I am talking about France. So he went to another spiritual healer at a place called Brakallo. He had an evil spirit. This man told him where he is

[TIMECODE - 24m:12s]

MA: Remember he ran away? Then he said that well in that case, this week he is going to leave Botswana and come home. Remember that he was gone to look for medicine?

Koko: And weapons

TM: In Botswana?

MA: Yes. When we were in jail in the holding cells in Zeerust – you see where we were I was only one detained who was young? On the other side there were 3 of them.

TM: And who was the one at the other side? Do you remember them who were detained? Who were they?

MA: One of them...I'm not sure where they stay. Who is it?

Koko: They are –

MA: Matsubi. It's here at the Matsubi's. That man here is Tenke

Koko: Tenke! Ja! Their surname is Badirabo.

TM: They are Badirabo?

MA: Yes, he is there. The other one is Mosimane.

Koko: Yes

MA: His family's surname is Mosimane. The other one was Setlako. His father was, I think Modisane. I think they were Modiseng. There were 4 of us men. From Bojoreng there were 3. I was the 4<sup>th</sup> one. This old man was brought to us late at night. Hans was waiting for him at the station that was coming from Mafikeng. And so when he got off, he got off with a big suitcase like this. He was coming from Botswana. The door when you're in jail closes from the outside. On the inside –

Koko: You can't -

MA: You can't open it from inside. As we are sitting, the chairs inside the prison cell are like this: [makes a loud, scratching sound]. Hey! What is that? They said he must cry with us because he did something bad. We ask: where do you come from? They told him to open the suitcase and drink some of the medicine.

TM: They told him to take them?

MA: Yes. So they took him. You see as there is God, and the cross? The picture of the Lord?

TM: Yes, Jesus Christ?

MA: They put it like that and say “when are you coming?” They had taken off all his shirts. All that was left was his pants. They hit him with canes. They hit him!

TM: Who hit him?

MA: *Maburu!*

TM: Right there in the holding cell?

[TIMECODE – 27m:06s]

MA: In the holding cell! They hit him! They had put some alcohol there. I think there were about 3 of them and there were 4 of us. And they just drank. And so he hit him. Right in the ribs. Then he goes back to sit down and drinks some more. It was daytime in the holding cell! I went to ask what we are going to do with these people. There was a chief in the morning and the evening. They asked what they should do because these people were killing here. They asked what this plan was all about. So there were chairs, right?

TM: Yes

MA: They go like this, and this, and this

TM: Oh those benches?

Koko: The benches

MA: Ja!

TM: Oh, I know them

MA: So let me tell you! I also don't know where I got this logic. They said, yes. So, you see these *Maburu* when they come in here at 9? You see everyone comes in here at 9? This night chief is going to beat this man. So we got close to the door. They used to keep the door open like this, right?

TM: Yes

MA: So then we would keep moving up and moving along. I know that if I close this door, it won't open for the inside

TM: From the inside, yes

MA: As they were sitting, I decided to push this door. They were surprised. *Maburu* were surprised. We were just getting some exercise. We jumped up then

TM: And who are you hitting at that point? *Maburu*?

MA: *Maburu*! We're hitting *Maburu*! They are lying all around. He hit them. They just have snot running down the noses like this...when they open up here being looked for, the *Boer* I was talking about

Koko: Legrans

TM: Legrans, yes?

MA\*: He just saw a lot of blood and *Maburu* lying on the floor. He says "are you Rannko"? \*[translated from Afrikaans].

[Laughter]

MA\*: He pointed his finger at me and asked \*"you! Are you Moshogang? *Kaffirtjie* [diminutive of a derogatory word for black people] [Translated from Afrikaans]. The other man says "you're so mischievous. You're so small but your small hands don't work properly. It's you who did this. The other man was finally able to rest. That was when they were able to fetch his wife and child. Um..."

[TIMECODE - 30m: 08s]

TM: Florence? Yes, Florence. She was Florence?

MA: Do you hear that?

TM: Yes

MA: As we got outside, you know in the mornings they open for us, they open for us at a time and we sit in the sun?

TM: Yes

MA: We find *Kgosi's* old lady here, holding a child. They put her in the prison and take the old lady as well. They start hitting people here and taking the passbooks. That old lady was in prison for 6 months in Pretoria

TM: In Pretoria, right? With the child?

MA: No, the child stayed.

TM: Oh the child stayed?

MA: Yes, but her aunt was coming to get her. They pushed her around and pushed her around and took – you know *Maburu* could even take people's goats

TM: Really?

MA: Yes! They could take your goat and kill it right there at the Lekubung School! This fighting started in this way.

TM: So the released you in '59?

MA: '59?

TM: Yes

MA: Yes. We had already served our time in jail!

TM: 2 years? So when you came back from jail, did you come back home here.

MA: We came back here home, yes.

TM: When you arrived back here, what did you do?

MA: We didn't do anything! Remember that we're finished? Even for them, the score has been settled with them, *Maburu*.

TM: Was the fighting over?

MA: The fighting was over, yes. Do you see? I was convicted in Pretoria. Do you see the Z.C.C badge? [A Christian denomination].

TM: Yes?

MA: I hadn't put mine on. I put it on once in jail. It was what watched over me. I put it right here. We worked at the execution house. Where they killed people. Just like a donkey with a carriage. You say father please help me, please help me.

[TIMECODE – 32m:22s]

TM: So, *Rra Mogolo*, the fighting for the passbooks came to an end and the forced removals began?

MA: To go there?

Koko: They were combined with the issue of the passbooks. The fighting with the passbooks was really one thing, you see. The passbooks and the forced removals, they were going together. Once they had come home from jail, they had already decided that they were no longer going to leave

TM: Oh, to leave, okay. *Rre Mogolo* let's go back just a little. When you were arrested you had mentioned that there was someone who had pointed you out

Koko: Yes

TM: Could you please tell us how it happened?

MA: Hmm?

TM: Who was it?

Koko: Who was it?

MA: Who was it? It was Richard Mafura. He moved away once we were convicted. He went to Rustenburg. Well, let me tell you: I was a bad person, just like your surname. Moloi. When I was involved in the box, I was asked if I wanted to speak. They asked "do you want to speak, young man?" and I said "yes, I want to speak". The man at the top there, judge? I don't know. I didn't know those things because even a *Boer* could work with him. I asked if this man who we are court with today, if when I come out of jail, I don't even want to see his shoe where I go!

[Laughter]

MA: My documents said – the white people said that they should take me to the school for disobedient children. *Maburu* refused and said "no! Not if he talks this much! Do you want him to go out of there and kill someone? Let him go to jail!" I said when I come out of jail, you, Piet Regrans. He is this man, you see you can sit out there with this man and his friends? I told him I never want to hear of him in our village. I don't even want to smell your waste! That is when they said that this *Kaffir* was crazy. Regrans then turned to me and said, you've been caught, man. Little did I know they he had a pipe and a kilogram of tobacco. He said "here is a gift. Go off now and go to jail".

Koko: So he was happy that you were had been caught at that point

MA: We wore shirts. Shirts like these ones.

TM: Red ones?

MA: shirts. And little shorts that were cut and came up to here

TM: Shorts?

MA: Yes, shorts.

[TIMECODE – 35m:41s]

MA: And we didn't wear shoes. You walk with your bare feet.

TM: Even when it was cold?

MA: They didn't care if it was cold! Those other men on this side got themselves beatings. Each one of them got 6 lashings or 8 lashings. On the buttocks. So they were removed.

TM: They removed them?

MA: They removed them. Here in Braklaagte we were in the same jail as older people. There were some sent to Rustenburg and we were separated by jails. I was in the jail on that side close to Bopedi, a place called Zonderwater [A name meaning without water in Afrikaans].

TM: Oh! Zonderwater!

MA: In Setswana they said Pieremang! We were taken there. We passed there and rested in Pretoria, near town. Now have you ever come across a cow that just makes a lot of noise?

TM: No

MA: A cow never talks. A Zulu person says "this is Umkhonto We Sizwe". A Zulu man would say this, but he was holding something. When we left there we went to Zonderwater to that place where people are always going to Moria. [The destination of the annual ZCC pilgrimage]. We passed that way near Moria

TM: At ZCC?

MA: At ZCC, yes. It was on that mountain over on the far side. When we got there, at Komponeng – they called it the lookout venue of the soldiers, I sighed, going into jail. I was with my badge

TM: Your badge, yes

MA: They gave me uniform. Grey clothing. They also shaved our heads. They shaved my head and shaved it

TM: Really?

MA: Well you were an inmate. You were in jail! When I got there, *Maburu* just looked at me. They had a meeting to say that I came from the rural areas. They saw it on my documentation. They said that I came from the rural areas. Zeerust.

Koko: There was *Kgosi*. He was only arriving then [Laughing]

MA: There were cows, some were for the dairy and some were for meat. And the beans! Have you ever seen a bean this big? A bean! We used to hammer things with a huge spade. When you went into the bush, you go with it, and you dig a hole just there. Remember that you couldn't just go outside? *Maburu* were on watch. *Matebele* and the Zulu's had canes. They were from Umkhonto. Remember that Umkhonto –

TM: Were actually watching you!

MA: Were guarding us!

TM: And so when they caught you and took you to jail, did they arrest you for burning houses?

[TIMECODE – 39m:13s]

MA: Yes

TM: Oh!

MA: We were burning them with canes. We were burning houses over the issues with the passbooks.

TM: Who was involved, *Ntate Mogolo*?

MA: Mafure!

TM: Mafure. And who else?

MA: The other one was called...I don't remember his name. The old lady would know. We only know that this was the man called *Rra Motenene* and the *Rapule's*. These were the people who also argued against us in court saying that we burnt down their houses. Honestly, they were pointing me out

TM: You?

MA: Yes, saying "it was him". You see? That people I was with were selling out to the *Kgosi*. They were still talking a lot. They just took them. It was said that it was them that made children vandalise.

TM: Vandalise, yes

MA: They refused for us to strike

TM: Oh, so in '59 when they released you, you come back here and do you start working at that point?

MA: Well you see at that point we are finished.

TM: Yes

MA: So then I went into the suburbs.

TM: The suburbs where?

MA: I went to Gauteng, on the mines. Yes, we worked on the mines. Mostly, we worked on the mines in Gauteng.

TM: Which mine did you work at *Rra Mogolo*? Do you still remember?

MA: Main Reef

TM: Main Reef

MA: In Maraisberg

TM: All right. And so as you are working there, are you still coming back home?

MA: Yes, as we worked we still came home

TM: And the living standards? What is that like?

MA: Huh?

[TIMECODE 41m:11 s]



TM: What is life like?

MA: No, life was fine after the fighting ended, once we were in jail now an there was no longer any secret dealings

TM: Oh! And were the women still milling?

MA: Yes, they were. We were also milling. Remember that the mining work would only take 9 months. So once you are finished those 9 months and you want to go back, you take 4 months break. You come home and you get to relax.

TM: And what were they paying you on the mines?

MA: They give 1 and 10. Remember that we were paid by the week [talking indistinct]

TM: Oh! Really?

MA: The problem was tax!

TM: They taxed it?

MA: Yes, we paid tax. 1 and 10 was mine, but they took it. They could leave you a Pound [old currency] after taking 10 Pounds.

TM: 10 Pounds? And now, this contract for the mines, where did you get it? Where did one sign up for it?

MA: *Rra?*

TM: For you to get the contract for you to work at the mine for those 9 months.

MA: We got it here in Zeerust

TM: Oh in Zeerust there was a place?

MA: Yes

TM: So you would get there and sign up?

MA: Yes. There were a lot of different people. Like people from all over this way going all the way down. We would all go there

TM: Really?

MA: Yes, there was an office there. So then he just said you were leaving. That same day at 14:00, the bus arrived and you got on and left. When you get there, you find that you are being treated to meat. They are showing you what is going to happen where you're going. When you get to the commissioner, you got some money in your pocket. The money that you got was 4 Pound or 3 Pound. The money that we got was around 4 Pound or 3 Pound.

TM: Yes

MA: You already have that but you haven't even worked a day but you've already got money.

TM: And that money? Are they going to take it?

[TIMECODE - 43m:50s]

MA: Yes

TM: Oh!

MA: They're going to take it. They're going to take it, right because the other one they don't show you. That 1 and 10. They don't give it to you, they just send it. You are only going to get it once you are back here and you are finished. Hmm, so we worked with these *Matebele* and they were smart, these *Matebele*.

TM: They were smart?

MA: It was like you as a *Motswana* and you were working with them and there is a white person and a *Boer* here and you talk Afrikaans, they are going to kill you with these rocks here

TM: Really?

MA: They would say that you're talking "waar-waar" and you are befriending them now. They would say that the *Motswana* thinks he's smart because he speaks "waar-waar".

TM: So how many times did you go back on the mines?

MA: Well I worked – I worked when we came back from jail. At that time the older men had a traditional school, so we went to that school in the mountains. When we came back from there, I went to Main Reef. So then I worked, I came back and then I took 4 months at Main Reef. Remember that the year was still a bit left, 9 was already over.

TM: 9 was already over, yes. So it was around '60 at that time?

MA: Yes. So then I worked at Main Reef and then I came home. When I came home here, I was at the homestead and they said the company you were working for is over. So then I went to Krugersdorp on the West Rand. Then I went to work on the West Rand.

TM: And was it a mine there as well?

MA: It was a mine

TM: Oh yes!

MA: So I worked there. Leaving there, I tried to get a job in the city and I couldn't find one. So then I went over to the other farms over there! I worked there. 14 years I worked there without coming home!

TM: Really? On the open land? What were you doing there?

MA: We worked with this old *Leburu* who sold early in the morning. There was also a dairy. There were some people who worked in the dairy and some people who worked with the animals. I worked with the animals.

TM: And these plots, were they in Gauteng?

MA: Yes, as you go out there and you go to Roodepoort, Krugersdorp you go up like that and there is a place called Lens [Lenasia]

TM: Oh yes I know Lens

[TIMECODE – 46m: 36s]

MA: There was some vacant land there. You see the sheep that people buy here in the township?

TM: Yes?

MA: They belonged to Mongadi.

TM: Oh all right

MA: So I worked there. That white man was very rich.

TM: So, please tell me about this issue of the Baphurutse land here in Braklaagte needing to fall under Bophuthatswana, how did that happen? Do you remember?

MA: What?

TM: The issue that Braklaagte must be under Mangope – *Rre Mangope*.

MA: Mangope

TM: Yes

MA: No, I'm not sure how it began, but that man. That man called Mangope. I don't know what they did because even with them, there were people accepting passbooks even on the side. There were people right there who were helping Mangope

TM: Right here in the village?

MA: The fighting because there were some advocates for Mangope who wanted him in who wanted him here. The ANC. We didn't want them here and we didn't want Mangope. And so, the fighting started. There were some people who said that and even now there are people who say that

TM: Yes, and that it how it is

MA: There were people here who would look at people and say they were supporters of Mandela. Then there were people supporting Mangope. The fighting began like this, like against the *Maburu*

TM: Really?

MA: Yes. There was a situation where these men of *Makgosing*. They were the ones that fought with us – Mangope's people.

TM: Mollwa?

MA: The Sebogodi's. So this conflict, it was happened like that. There were people that...we were just like this. And they asked us if we were still Mangope's people. They asked if we were still supporters of Mangope. Him and the people of the ANC

TM: Yes, so the ANC supporters were for Grans Mogodi. ANC people say they are from Sebogodi. So did that fuel the fight?

MA: Yes. So we said no, we are not going to be part of Bophuthatswana. You see this man started out as a teacher over therein Masibodolle.

TM: Oh, *Rre Mangope*.

[TIMECODE – 49m: 23s]

MA: So now – remember he had gone to school to be a priest?

TM: Oh!

MA: So as he passed there, he said it's Bophutatswana! Most people fell under him and others said no, we don't want these things. We fought for our land. He said well in that case, there is nothing that you can do. They are going to move you. We went on strike about the passbooks and then we went on strike again! He said well he would have to arrest us and take us to Bophuthatswana and we said that there was no way we were going there. So then he brought soldiers here and he built a place there at Moilwa's.

TM: And so did the soldiers stay there?

MA: Yes. And no-one passed there. During the fighting we couldn't just sleep here. Next thing we would be taken on Hippo's. They just wanted the men. Then *Batswana* hit – they were *Batswana* – they hit! They would even pick up other cultural groups without even knowing what these cultural groups are, they would just take them. And they would just hit them. They didn't know if maybe they were hitting a person because they were talking to them and they didn't hear. There were some people who took their children and went to Moilwa... he was Mangope's person. This Moilwa is the older one. The one who joined actually passed away. So you knew he was using some medication.

TM: Ja

MA: So some of Mangope's soldiers came. They just didn't care. They said remove your skirts.

TM: Did they come into people's homes?

MA: Yes! They would find you on the street, too. You could find people sitting like at *Kgosi's* place. They could get there, take some people and –

TM: Then they were arrested?

MA: They would just say “come one”! And people would weep!

TM: And they were forcing to be under their rule. What about the ANC? What was your involvement with it?

MA: Huh?

TM: ANC.

MA: You see I don't quite remember how we got involved with it. It was just that they knew that people in Braklaagte were soldiers. That is when we decided that we didn't want Mangope. We wanted that other old man. A lot of men, the older man who worked in Gauteng came together to involved with it there

TM: Oh! In Gauteng!

MA: So they decided that we would stay with

TM: Ah!

[TIMECODE- 52m:44]

TM: But before that, did you know about the ANC?

MA: No, we didn't know it.

TM: You didn't know it

MA: We heard about it starting with these conflicts. But before that? ANC? We didn't know it.

TM: So what about these fights to get you under the government of *Rre Mangope*? How did that end?

MA: Mangope?

TM: Yes

MA: Well how it ended by us saying that we didn't want him. We decided that we didn't want him. All of us decided. He was forcing for all of us to fall under his jurisdiction. We refused adamantly. We would have rather fallen under that other man

TM: Oh! Okay. What was the main reason for you all to refuse?

MA: No, we didn't know him. He didn't want to speak to people. He only came on account of the fact that he was the President and all these villages were his and we were all his people. The young man was still lived here

TM: Oh he was still lived here

MA: Yes. He also didn't want to

TM: Oh he also didn't agree

MA: They hit him, and he was fighting for this land

TM: So you were saying that you were only in this village, but you were divided? So were there no fights?

MA: There were fights, do you hear what I'm saying.

TM: Ja

MA: They were all at Moilwa's. Moilwa was the one in cahoots with Mangope

TM: Oh so this is the same issue even today?

MA: Yes. So then he decided to support Mangope, right? Because his father was *Kgosi*.

TM: Oh so we was the *Kgosi* of the Baphurutshe? So when he passed away, it was the turn of *Rre Lekoloane*

MA: Yes!

TM: Ah, okay.

MA: The fight against Mangope was spoilt in this way

TM: Oh!

[TIMECODE – 55m:03s]

MA: So at that time, do you see how things were? And that is what made the fighting worse. So it turned out that this young man wasn't able to fight as well. Mangope said well I've got you now. And then Moilwa then took a *Sjambok*. Then Moilwae went and gathered soldiers and brought them here

TM: So how did they know that you didn't want to go there, you wanted to go there? How did they make that distinction?

MA: The people had run away

TM: Really?

MA: People had run away and left their houses in townships. Mothers, fathers, do you understand? There was no one left. That us how they know that we were really here and we were refusing that this old man, this Xhosa old man

TM: Mandela

MA: He was the one who got to see the people in the townships and how they were suffering

TM: Oh did you come here?

MA: They were sleeping in the churches. They were sleeping in the schools. Women and children were struggling. When they arrived, they served up food – Mandela. He gave them blankets

TM: Oh so when people left they had also left all their belongings?

MA: Yes, they had left all their belongings there. They had left because of the conflict with Mangope.

TM: Things were bad, *Rra Mogolo*.

MA: Yes. It was only this issue with Mangope that Mandela started returning people. That old Xhosa man said that these people would return home. They were suffering. He left them as they talked about Mangope's people and the ANC

TM: And so as you returned back home, were the soldiers still there?

MA: No. They had been kicked out

TM: Oh kicked out?

MA: Yes. We kicked them out with just the letter he wrote saying they must leave because people were going back home. So they left and returned to Mangota.

TM: Oh!

MA: So it was that time that they went with Mangope. Remember that Mangope went to stand trial in Mafikeng?

TM: Yes

[TIMECODE – 57m:38s]

MA: He stayed there in Mafikeng with his old man

TM: Yes, okay

MA: He said to the old man that he didn't know how to speak to someone who had come out of jail – a criminal.

TM: Yes

MA: He was kicked out of there and brought back to Motsweding with the message that he should rather come back home. Are you telling me that I'm a criminal? You're making people suffer! Can you really say that we went to school so we can help people and then we want *Maburu* to leave us alone and leave the people alone and now you want to tell me that I'm a criminal? Go home. So people started coming back here. They came back to live at home. They were brought back by the old man [Mandela]. He went to – do you know that shop that you passed on the tar road? This place this side was a shop. Right at that first home when you pass there

TM: Yes, I see it

MA: They would wait there. The bus that we rode to get to work in town, we were escorted off!

TM: Escorted off by who?

MA: The *Sjambok* sounded! It was the solders!

TM: What did they want?

MA: Heh?

TM: What did they want?

MA: They didn't want us working and going back to the villages. They wanted us to stay in the township.

TM: Oh! Really?

MA: Because we were disobeying the rules. We were disobeying Mangope's rules. The *Sjambok* would sound, sir!

TM: Ja

MA: It was really hardship for us. The government was fighting us. And what was this fight about? I work hard. The next year you would see me again. I was getting forgetful

TM: You were getting forgetful

MA: I was getting old.

TM: Yes

MA: I was getting old, you see? I say all these things and when you leave, and they could say "hey! Where the documents for this old man"?

[TIMECODE – 59m: 42s]

MA: You know at this point I'm tired. Actually, it's not that I'm tired. The ears are no longer working and the hands are not working. So you see these things started and ended in that way

TM: In that way, yes. So now, *Rra Mogofo*, we are in a new government now, which is for the people. What is like right now in Braklaagte?

MA: No, you know the problems now are all just illnesses. Life is just like how I have said it to you.

TM: And what about the land? Are people still milling?

MA: Hmm?

TM: Are people still milling?

MA: No

TM: People are no longer milling

MA: It is all over now. You see there are just trees.

TM: And how are people living right now?

MA: People are living here like white people! In this government at least they give us a bit of money because you are older. That you are a teacher gives a bit of money. It doesn't matter who you are. As we are talking, there is no water in this village. Really, there is no water. If you start over here and go over there! Where the old lady was talking about

TM: Yes, at Matlome's

MA: Yes, at Matlome. The village ends there, and there is no water. So I don't know we are going to talk to. You see this man, this *Kgosi*. Living here is a challenge because people are sick. So I got a phone call this morning that I should come this side

TM: Yes, *Rre*

MA: I was here at Lesofa, close to the gathering place

TM: Oh really?

MA: Yesterday was Sunday, right?

TM: Yes

MA: We were finishing off. We were at a funeral on Saturday. Even right now, I got a phone call saying that I am wanted. Even they want to speak to me. They asking where the old man of the meetings is because I am the old man. Where is the old man for the Motsusi family?

TM: Are they all gone?

MA: They were all gone, even the old women.

TM: All of them?

[TIMECODE – 01h: 02m:00s]



MA: All of them. That is how it works in Tswana culture.

TM: Yes.

MA: So that is why I say even this morning they told me of a phone call. When I asked what it was about, they said there was a visitor who wanted to see me. So I came in a hurry because I live in the village on the other side

TM: Oh yes, there at the top?

MA: Yes

TM: We will try our best to make sure that this story of yours does not get forgotten. We are going to write so that they know what happened, *Ntate Mogolo*.

MA: Thank you, *Rre Moloji*, because as they called and said you wanted to talk, I thought there was going to be bad news.

TM: No, we will try our best

MA: I heard the old lady saying she was going to talk to your people. Were you here last week with the *Kgosi*?

TM: No, I actually just arrived yesterday

MA: Last week as well I thought I heard of others

TM: Oh, no.

MA: Yes, I didn't meet with them. So when I heard them say that this man was looking for me and that you were from far away, from wherever, I thought "no ways! I don't want to meet with those people! Why have they come all this way? What do they want? How do they know me?" The old lady told me to talk nicely to you because you young people are very sweet. They are not going to bother you or make you suffer.

TM: We will try our best. We will try our best.

MA: Thank you

TM: *Rre Mogolo*? You know I wanted to thank you. I wanted to thank you for your time and our conversation. I am also very glad to meet you because it goes to show that you worked really hard, *Ntate Mogolo*. We will end it just there.

[END]





