



# Interview with Nomhlangano Beauty Mkhize

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Tshepo Moloi (TM): Today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2013. I'm Tshepo Moloi in Driefontein with Mama Beauty Mkhize. I'm going to interview her for the South African History Archive (SAHA) Land Act of 1913 project. Mama, I'd like to take this time to thank you for allowing me to meet and talk to you. Like I was explaining that this project is about the Land Act (of 1913) and we identified Driefontein, to look specifically at the issue of the forced removals and how the community of Driefontein resisted them. But we'd also like to know how this land that the community fought so hard for is being used today in a democratic South Africa: how is it benefitting the community? Are there any changes you can tell us about since the days of resistance against the forced removals? However, before you deal with these issues, I'd like you to introduce yourself and explain to me who Mama Mkhize is and where was she born?

Beauty Mkhize (BM): (Laughs) Tshepo, I'd also like to thank you. My name is Nomhlangano Beauty Mkhize. But I was born in the Khuluse family. I was born in Sophiatown. In 1956 there forced removals there and we were moved from Sophiatown and brought to Soweto. You see, because I was born in 1940 then I wasn't clever enough to understand what was happening, but I could see that we were being removed from Sophiatown and taken to Soweto and we settled in Meadowlands, Zone 4. I grew up there and started working at a factory that was producing jerseys in Jeppestown. We were very busy in that factory. We worked throughout, even on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition overtime work was in abundance. During this time I was already having an affair with Saul (Mkhize). I told Saul that I was now really tired of working. I said I wanted to leave Jozi (Johannesburg) and go and live somewhere else where no one would know where I am. I mean, where I was working we had no time to rest. We both agreed that he would go and tell them that he wants to take me to his birth place.

TM: Tell who?

BM: My employers. I instructed him to go and inform the factory owners that he wants me to stop working because he wanted me to go and stay at his home. I had had enough of working throughout. I mean, I would work at the factory and work again when I got home. I didn't have time to rest. So we agreed. In 1981 I arrived in Driefontein. When I arrived here there was talk that the apartheid government wanted to remove the community of Driefontein to Babanango and Lochiel. In 1982 the situation became tense. At this stage he (Saul Mkhize) had connections with people working for the LRC (Legal Resources Centre), Black Sash, and TRAC (Transvaal Rural Action Committee). He asked these people to assist him to block the government's attempts to remove the community of Driefontein. These people came to Driefontein many times to hold meetings. At this stage I wasn't interested in politics. I didn't even understand why the government wanted to remove the community of Driefontein, because I was aware that the people of this had bought the land and built their own houses. The main reason the community of Driefontein were able to resist the government's attempts was because the landowners here had their title deeds, which they received from Pixley Ka Isaka Seme when he bought this land on their behalf in 1912. They were in a better position unlike in other areas where people didn't have title deeds to prove that they owned the land. And here the community had strong leaders. The latter used to fight to the extent that Mkhize formed his own board called Council Board. The men who in the Council Board were very strong, because when the government started exerting pressure bringing in buses to transport people to go and view the places where it wanted move them to ... I mean, the government wanted to move us to Babanango, in Natal; a place we didn't even know how it looked like. They fought. I must mention that within a community people differ. There were those within the community who wanted to move and there were those who refused to move. Those who wanted to move had been promised by the government that where they were

being moved to ... You see, in Driefontein we don't have a chief or chiefs. Each person is a chief in his own stand. No one can dictate what the other stand owner can and cannot do. So those who wanted chieftdom were the ones who wanted to move. Those who refused to move followed Mkhize. The leader of the group that supported the removals was Simon Yende. We suspect that the government had promised him the chieftainship only if he could convince everyone in the community to agree to move. He would rule over everyone, including those who refused to move. In fact he could even make them his *Indunas* (advisors). The majority of the community of Driefontein swore that they would rather die than move from this place. The then government had many tricks to make people to agree to what it wanted to achieve. Equally, some of the members of the community had their own tricks which they used to resist the government. For instance, here they relied on the LRC, Black Sash and TRAC. There was a very powerful woman called Sheena Duncan. She would arrive here and walk around the whole Driefontein. You could see that she couldn't understand why the government persisted on removing this community when the people had the title deeds. The reason the government wanted to remove this community from here it's because it was aware that there were minerals underneath the land. I mean, you can see for yourself that this place is rich with coal. It wanted to enrich itself with this coal without sharing with the landowners of Driefontein. The people of Driefontein resisted the government. And in 1982...

TM: Let's hold it there and go back a bit. You said you arrived here in 1981

BM: Yes, I arrived in 1981

TM: Was that the first time you set foot in Driefontein?

BM: When I arrived the talk about the removals was already there.

TM: When you arrived in 1981 how was this place – can you describe it?

BM: It was your typical rural area. The people here still adhered to rules. It was totally different from where I came from. I wanted to tell you a secret: when I arrived here I was wearing a slag

TM: What's a slag?

BM: A trouser that was worn by women. When I left Jozi I wore that kind of clothing and I used to wear a skirt but did not wear a *doek* (head scarf) on my head. When I arrived here I found that all the women here wore a *doek*. I remember asking Mkhize what kind of place was this? Why were all the women here wearing a *doek*? His response was: if you want to stay here you must decide on two things: you wear a *doek* but can't wear a trouser, or you don't wear a *doek* and continue wearing whatever clothing you choose. He said I don't want to force you to do anything you don't want. I looked around whenever we attended meetings the women here were wearing skirts and *doeks*. They looked respectable. And I would attend the meetings showing my hair. Mkhize remained calm. When we returned to Driefontein from Jozi he asked me what have I decided. I said I have decided to wear a *doek* and wear a skirt, and I'll give all my clothes to my sister's children. That's how I stopped wearing a slag and go around without a *doek*. I just told myself that I would follow the rules that other women follow here. I have been like since then. Well, inside the house I can stay without a *doek*, but when I go outside it's like there's a voice reminding me that I didn't wear a *doek* (laughs). Then I'd go back inside the house and wear a *doek*.

TM: Wow!

BM: That's how I got used to the lifestyle here. And people were wondering how a child from eGoli (Johannesburg) can behave like this. I used to say it's because I'm in love with a person who comes from this place and I also like this place. So I must do what's done here. That's how I got used to Driefontein. I lived here and found it a very respectable place. I remember thinking to myself that I would live for many years before I die. This is because here it was very rare to hear that there was death. We'd hear about death once maybe in three months. It was different from Soweto where we buried people almost everyday. This year I'm 72 years old and have never experienced any problems in Driefontein.

TM: And how were the houses?

BM: When I arrived here people used to build their houses with mud. Hey, we would walk long distance to fetch water and carry it on our head. I remember thinking 'Oh, my God, will I survive here?' Remember I wasn't used to that kind of lifestyle. Where I came from we didn't carry water on our head. We used just open a tap which was nearby and get water. But because I was in love with the person who was from that place...

TM: Where did you fetch water?

BM: How can I describe it for you? Do you see where you entered Driefontein, at the bridge? I would have to walk that distance to go and fetch water with one bucket.

TM: Wow!

BM: Luckily there were other people who had pits in their yards. We'd sometimes go to them and ask for water. They wouldn't request any payment. They'd just say 'go ahead and get water'. My only challenge was that I had to carry a bucket full water on my head and that was something I was not used to. I would go and fetch water, helped by my son Bongani. I didn't experience any problems with wood for making fire, because at Mkhize's home there was a big forest. We'll try to drive up there to see that place.

TM: Yes, just to see the place.

BM: Because there was a forest it was easy to fetch wood nearby. It was only water that gave me problems. While staying in Driefontein Mkhize bought two cows for me. I didn't even know how to hold a cow. One of the cows got lost and I had to look for it. I didn't even know where to start looking for it, but my neighbours helped me. We went around looking for it and we found it in other people's homestead. We took it back home. There was a certain old man called Zebulon Ndlangamandla who said ... [disturbed]. When this old man arrived we drove these cows to my homestead and he tied them. He ordered me to hold the rope so that he could fasten them. Believe me one of the cows moved angrily and the rope I was holding pulled out the whole skin of my palm. I could only see white skin on my palm. I said 'No, *mkhulu* (grandpa) sell these cows. I can't stand for this. Now look at my hand.' The old man laughed and sat down and said 'Do you know what this means? You're going to have many cows.'

TM: Haa?

BM: Believe me. Today as we speak I have 18 cows (stumping the table with her hand). Even then I have sold others and slaughtered others. I remember that old man's words that my cows will multiply one day. And indeed they have. I even have sheep. Life is going on. Let's return to our story.

TM: When you arrived here in Driefontein you lived at the Mkhize's homestead. And you earlier mentioned that the people here had bought this land. How big was their stand?

BM: During that time they were called 10 morgen, and then whites changed it and said they were eight hectares. But where I lived there were two stands. One was below, which belonged to my father in-law. And where I lived it was Saul's grandfather's stand. But these stands belonged to the whole family. As the years went by and when our government identified stands I decided buy my own stand. I felt that I couldn't live in the family stands forever, because you're never comfortable in such a set up. You know, family members would always remind you that you're living in their grandmother's house. So I decided to purchase my own stand. So there's a big homestead where I lived when I arrived in Driefontein and now I have my own homestead. And I refer it as Vus'muzi's (Saul Mkhize) home. And the big homestead that's Vus'muzi's birthplace. These places are close to each other. I sometimes go to the big homestead to clean, cook and eat over there, then return to my home to sleep. If I like, because I still have my rondavel there, I sometimes sleep over there. The nice thing is that we're united as a family. All the graves of the Mkhizes are in the big homestead.

TM: Was it a norm for family members in Driefontein to be buried in their homesteads?

BM: No, it wasn't really a norm. I don't know why grandpa decided to do that. So all the Mkhizes, including grandpa himself was buried there in the big homestead.

TM: We spoke about water. Where were the people of Driefontein working?

BM: That was a major problem. Around this place employment was very scarce. Those who worked used to wake up very early in the morning to catch trucks taking them to their work in the forests, where they cut big trees. When I arrived here those people were earning pittance. For example, to cut a size eighth tree they were paid 5 cents. What that meant was that in order to earn a respectable wage you had to over work yourself for you earn many 5 cents. Then at the end of the month you could afford to buy a bag of sugar, maize meal, and other things to feed your family. At that stage work was very scarce. That's the reason many people from here, especially men, worked and lived in Jozi. They'd return home every month end. As time went some of the women started complaining that this lifestyle was causing strains in their families, because the men end up tempted and having affairs in Jozi. In some cases they end up marrying those women in Jozi. And the women from Jozi are married in the western way hence they have documentation to prove. And should anything happen to the husband the women from Jozi are entitled to everything because of *iphepha* (marriage certificate). I as a traditional wife I don't have any saying in the decisions that are taken. I'll be left maybe with the three cows that my husband had bought. But the rest of my husband's belongings ... You know, our husbands when they work in Jozi they have UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund), holiday funds. All these benefits are given to the wife from Jozi and I don't receive anything. So after a while ... Okay, I think I'm moving to fast. There was a time when the government was exerting pressure on the community to leave Driefontein, Mkhize was supposed to come and report back to the community about his meetings in Jozi and who he met there. I think he even met with Helen Suzman looking for help to stop the removals. The question he always asked was: 'if we leave this place who's going to look after our next of kin especially our grandfathers and mothers who were buried here?'

TM: How did uBaba Mkhize meet with the organisations that you have mentioned: Black Sash, Trac and the LRC?

BM: In Jozi. Remember he was also working in Jozi. He made me come and live in the rural areas and he stayed in Jozi. So he knew where to look for help over there. He contact Black Sash and lawyers for help.

TM: What kind of work was he doing in Jozi?

BM: At first he was working for ... Hey, *mtaka ka Khuluse* (daughter of Khuluse). Ja, at first he was working for certain lawyers. He left that work and found employment in a printing company ...

I forget other things. But I have the information in the documents at home. I just forget the name of that printing company. I hope I'll remember it later. While working there he had his own connections.

TM: Yes, yes.

BM: By the time I left there ... Oh, while I was working I was a shop-steward at the factory where I was working. I was responsible for looking after the workers' issues about money, working conditions. That's when I met Mkhize who had his own problems. So he then started bringing these organisations here in Driefontein. We then informed him about the problem we were experiencing about the pension. The local magistrate, who was also involved in the issue of forced removals, prevented old people from receiving their pension. We asked him to talk to these organisations to come to Driefontein to assist these old people to receive their pension.

TM: Okay. When you arrived here in 1981 you found that people were talking about the forced removals...

BM: It was already there. But then I didn't understand what was happening exactly. After all I had just arrived from Jozi. I would listen to Mkhize when he had come home talking about this issue. He would tell me about the meetings he was attending. But it took some time before I could really understand what was happening. When I started to understand it was the end of 1981.

TM: How did you get to understand this issue?

BM: Then I was becoming used to the area and I would ask some of the men about this issue. Remember at this stage I was still thinking like a shop-steward. So I knew the tricks of searching for information. These men explained to me. They were really nice to me. So when Mkhize returned home I would then ask him about his meetings. You know, every time he came home he would bring a bottle of Scotch – I started drinking with Mkhize. He'd bring Scotch with him and I'd cook supper. After supper he'd say bring two glasses and let's sit down. He'd open Scotch and start to tell me about the places he went to and the people he met. There was a night when he arrived at home and he said I had informed the other men to organise a meeting and in this meeting I'm going to inform the community what the lawyers said. I then said 'It's fine don't worry I'd get the full story at the meeting. Let's eat and go and sleep because tomorrow we have to wake very early. We have to arrive at the meeting early before the community.' In the morning we woke up and I made breakfast. He then said 'Bongani, today I want you to attend the meeting.' Bongani asked why. He said 'I don't want you to ask me why, but I want you to attend the meeting. I want you to know what is happening in this place, so that tomorrow if it happened that I die you should be able to continue where I left.'

TM: He had enough said this before to Bongani before. Or had he?

BM: No. We'd wake up in the morning and go to the meetings and leave Bongani at home.

TM: How old was Bongani then?

BM: He was born in 1964 and this happened in 1982 [actually it was in 1983 – TM]. I could see that Bongani wasn't happy but I couldn't side with him and go against Mkhize. I said 'Bongani your father has spoken so let's go. I'm also going'. I could see that he wasn't happy and didn't want to go to that meeting. I think it was the work of God to show Bongani where his father was going to be killed. We went to the meeting.

TM: Where did you meet?

BM: At a school called Qalani. When we arrived we found that many people were already there. Some came after us. The meeting was scheduled to start at 10. And while waiting there for 10 a

police van arrived. Some of the people at the meeting were asking Mkhize not to start the meeting because others were still coming. The police van came inside the school yard and went out again. A white policeman got out of the van and stood at the gate and watched the people at the meeting.

TM: Who was that?

BM: Nienaber. Mkhize then said we should start the meeting. When we were about to start the meeting he (Nienaber) approached Mkhize and asked him what we were doing there? Mkhize said to him 'What are you doing here?' Then Nienaber said 'You can't ask me that question because I'm a police officer'. Mkhize responded: 'This is our place, where we were born. And we do things in any way we want. You were supposed to request permission from us to come here. Or should've asked if you wanted to attend our meeting.' At this stage there were many people attending the meeting. This boer slapped Mkhize.

TM: In front of all those people?

BM: Yes. Mind you the meeting hadn't even started. He slapped him and the people moved towards this boer. Mkhize told the people to stop where they were. He said we shouldn't harm him, because maybe if we do that we'd have spoiled everything we've been fighting for. 'Let him tell us what is it that he wants'. Then this boer held Mkhize by his clothes. The people were very angry. I think one of them pulled this boer from the back and this boer let loose of Mkhize. They hit that boer with sticks. I remember Nienaber was with another black policeman called Khumalo. They hit Nienaber with sticks but he managed to break free and ran away and jumped the fence.

TM: Nienaber?

BM: Both of them. They ran to their van. Nienaber opened the van at the back and pulled out a gun. He first shot a tree and there was dust all over the place. He approached Mkhize and shot him and shot him again. Mkhize felt down. He took his gun and put it back in his van. He then went inside his van and drove it inside the school yard. I think he wanted to take Mkhize's body.

TM: Mmmm

BM: He came in and ordered that people should pick Mkhize's body and put in his van. I asked him 'Who should be picked up?' He said Mkhize. I responded 'And where should they take him?' He said they should put him inside his van. I picked a stone and threw it at him but he ducked it. He was very angry. He went inside his van again. The people started pelting his van with stones. He managed to drive his van out of the yard and ran away. I asked some of the people to organise transport to take him to Piet Retief to a doctor. We took him and went to a doctor in Piet Retief. And when we arrived there the doctor told us that Mkhize was no longer alive. Really I couldn't understand what they had said. And I thought they're crazy. I told the men I was with - those men were members of the Board - that we should take Mkhize to Ermelo. I said these doctors are supposed to say what they've said because they're siding with the government and were well aware that we were resisting the removals. We left, and when we arrived there we were seen by a certain doctor and that doctor confirmed that Mkhize had long died. I sat down and I saw darkness yet it was during the day. I couldn't understand what was happening. They asked me to take off his cufflinks and tie and its pin, and ring. They said we should take him to the mortuary. We took him there and that's where we left him. We returned home. When we arrived at home there were many people waiting for us there. When we came in they realised that he had passed on. After that Nienaber came to Driefontein again the following day and met a certain old man called Modki. Modki was riding his horse. That policeman was full of himself. He took Modki's horse and rode it. The people got angry and pelted him with stones and the horse galloped harder and he fell on the ground. He ran away. After explaining everything at home, we then started arranging for the funeral. Mkhize's corpse was taken from Ermelo to Jozi where his post-

mortem was done. It was done at Diepkloof. It was his brothers who lived in Jozi who did the post-mortem. After all that we buried him. That was in 1983. After 1983 – I was still mourning, wearing black clothes – some of the men then said we can't lose Mkhize and then Driefontein: 'Mama, whether you're mourning or not you have to take over where Mkhize left off. Because you're from Jozi you'll have to guide us how to get to Black Sash, LRC and Trac'.

TM: Were these the members of the Board?

BM: Yes, they were members of the Board.

TM: What were their names?

BM: Hey, it was Modki Maseko, Elias Ntsibande, Victor Manqele, Zebulon Ndlangamandla. There was also Sangweni, Steven Maseko, Bheki Nkonyane, Sitha Gama, Johannes Vilakazi – Jane's brother-in-law. The latter became the chairperson after Mkhize was killed. He also passed away. And then Jane (Vilakazi) was also part of the Board. I think we were the only two women in that Board.

TM: Before then were there no women?

BM: No, there were no women. Initially I used to sit in their meetings because I used to cook for them. But it was a boys' choir. You know, after Mkhize's death we were really fought the removals. Those men were very strong. At Denver hostel they demanded a report every month from us. We were supposed to travel to Jozi every month to give them a report about the developments in Driefontein.

TM: Wow!

BM: Yes. They used to give us money for transport.

TM: Who was living at Denver?

BM: People from Driefontein who were employed in eGoli. They demanded a report every month. We'd go there and report about what was happening and return home. During this period I was still serving my mourning term.

TM: Can you explain to me what did you report?

BM: We reported the developments and what were the lawyers saying.

TM: What were the lawyers saying to you then?

BM: We had a very strong lawyer, Geoff Budlender, who worked for the LRC. He worked closely with people at TRAC like Aninka Claassens and those in the Black Sash. Those groups were very strong. We reported to them that the government was adamant that it wanted to remove us, because it wanted to build a dam. We asked the question: how is the dam going to benefit us? We don't care for the dam. We felt that building of the dam was the government's excuse to remove us from Driefontein, so it would be in a position to extract the minerals underground they it desired.

TM: So there was no dam here

BM: Yes, there was no dam here. Instead there were three streams. That's why this area is called Driefontein. These streams used to converge in one area. To build this dam they combined those streams.



TM: Mmmm

BM: You see the government was communicating with Geoff (Budlender) and Geoff would come and inform what they government had said. Sometimes we would travel to Jozi to get the report from Geoff. Then we would return to report to the Board. The Board would then call a community meeting. At this stage there was opposition between us and those who were looking for chieftainship: they wanted to move and we were refusing to move. So we no longer held our meetings here in Driefontein but at Heyshop Dam. There's an area up there (pointing eastwards) called Heyshop Dam. That's where this dam starts, and there are houses as well. We met in an office there.

TM: Whose office?

BM: It was the government's office. That's where we used to meet with Geoff and others.

TM: Who else did you meet with there?

BM: We used to meet with ... hey, who were those people (thinking). Eh, Koornhof and Wilkins ... Wilkins? It was a group representing the government. Just like here (closer to the Driefontein municipal offices) there were GG (General Government) offices. Down there where there are zozos (shacks). GG used to store all its building equipments. It would maintain the roads and all that. That's where its offices were. Now those whites ... I can't remember whether they fell under *Die onswiek* ... *Ja*, it was an Afrikaans word. I'll look for it in my documents at home. Those were the people we used to meet with, together with ... hey, who's this boer? Why am I forgetting his name? I'll look for his name in my documents and will let you know. Yes, those were the people that we used to meet with; they wanted to remove us. Geoff was our strong lawyer. I can still in 1985 - I was still mourning. At the time I was very thin. I think I was wearing size 32. From size 40 to 32. I would wear an extra skirt underneath my mourning garment, so that this garment shouldn't be loose. On that day when we arrived I was feeling really down and I was very angry. Geoff informed us that today was the final day to decide this issue: we could either be removed or not.

TM: AT this stage had any of the members of the community left Driefontein?

BM: No. Here in Driefontein no one left, even those who supported the removals didn't move. *Ja*, that day I was feeling down. When those whites arrived and getting inside the office, smiling I didn't smile back. I just looked at them. I went in with Geoff and sat down. The meeting started. But still I was feeling really down. Then Geoff said today we'd hear what the government intentions are, what would happen to Driefontein. Oh, before the start of the meeting I said to Geoff 'You see today, please before you start the meeting I want to tell you that if the government decides to remove us from here I would like to know when this would happen so that I can dig my own grave next to Saul's (Mkhize). And the day the government returns to remove the people what it did to Saul it must also do to me. I, unlike Saul, do not need a coffin. It would just push me into the grave and close it so that the dogs could not reach my corpse Then it could take its Driefontein. I hope God would be with them wherever they go. That's my request from them if they continue insisting that they want us to move.

TM: Mmmm

BM: I left the office and went to sit outside.

TM: Was this meeting at the offices at Heyshop dam?

BM: Yes. We held all our meetings there. I can't recall the name of this Wilkins guy ... He requested that I should be called to come in. Geoff came to tell me, but I said 'Hey, Geoff I don't

feel like going in there. I want you to inform me about the decision that was taken in there'. Geoff begged me to go in and I did. I sat down. Then Wilkins said 'Mrs Mkhize I've got good news'. I asked 'What good news of wanting to remove us from Driefontein?' He responded and said 'No. From today I'd never trouble you in Driefontein and I won't remove you'. Iyoo, I cried! I said 'If only you were telling me this while Mkhize was still alive – (crying) – it would have been better'.

TM: Mmmm

BM: So that he could see that the efforts he put into our resistance have finally been realised. I said 'But I want to thank you, because I'd still be able to continue living with Mkhize here in Driefontein'. I told him 'My aim was to always clean his grave but you wanted to remove us from here. For me it was either you wake him up and then remove us or you leave us here'. Well, finally the removals were stopped and Driefontein remained as it was. They then offered us lunch and I refused, and said 'I want to go home, because in my custom, I have to go to Mkhize's grave to inform him about today's decision. After that I can have lunch but my own lunch'. That's my custom. I mean, whenever I come to our meetings I first go to his grave to tell him that I'm on my way to a meeting with the people who want to remove us. I plead with him saying 'Please be strong in your grave and do not allow them to remove us because we'd be forced to leave you behind'. I said to Wilkins 'Even Geoff knows about my custom. In fact I'm going to ask him to accompany me when I go to Mkhize's grave'. After their lunch, Geoff drove with me back home. And when we arrived I said 'Geoff, we're going to Mkhize's grave and you have to inform him about today's decision'. Ag shame, Geoff was so nice. We went there and he spoke to Mkhize and explained everything to him. And ended by saying 'From today the people of Driefontein would never be removed. We want to thank you. These are the fruits of your hard work'. I thanked Geoff for agreeing to do that.

TM: When was the community informed about this decision?

BM: The community was called to a meeting and told about the decision. Then the community suggested that we should slaughter cows to give thanks and invited Geoff to bring along all the people he worked with who helped us. I'm telling you! The members of the community contributed their own monies for that party. They bought cows. They also requested some of the farm owners living in the surrounding environs to contribute. As a community we also agreed that we should invite even those who supported the removals. After we had done all this, Samuel Yende ... [sneezing] and his followers went to the government and said 'Government, we request you to give us another land. Driefontein is too crowded'. You see, the boers who lived close to Driefontein were now chasing away some of the people who lived on their farms. These people had nowhere to go. So they came to live in Driefontein. You know, those boers would take their people and dump them on the road. Our people felt pity for those people and suggested that they should come to Driefontein and request landowners to accommodate them as tenants. That's why today Driefontein is so congested. Initially there were about 309 plot-owners here in Driefontein. Many of the people who finally settled here were from the farms as far as Piet Retief. They would come here and they would be accommodated by the land-owners.

TM: What was the reason for these people to be chased away from the farms?

BM: You see, when your grandfather was employed on the farm and when your son to work on the farm comes and you refuse – because you younger generation don't want to work on the farms. Instead you want to go to Jozi – then the boer would say 'well, you can't stay on my farm if you're not working here. So you must leave'. Sometimes you'd find that the younger generation become involved in politics and start to question why should his grandfather work on the farm and his father, now him. They then refuse to work. Then boer chase them away from his farm. And when they arrive here they request accommodation from the stand-owners. You know, tenants here only pay rental once a year. For example, those living in the Mkhize homestead they're paying R50 a year. But believe me they don't want to pay that money. There are some who still owe us money. This puzzles me because we're helping them.

TM: How do they justify their behaviour?

BM: They say they don't have money.

TM: Are they not working?

BM: But their children are employed. Even so, but only R50? I'd rather sell apples so that I could raise that R50 and pay rent.

TM: And can you chase them away from your homestead?

BM: If you chase them away where would they go? Well, we're staying with them and we fought the resistance together with them. The other important point is that some of the tenants were participated in our struggles against the forced removals; they too didn't want to move. So it's not easy to chase them away, because they played an important role too. Then we decided to look for another farm where the tenants could purchase land and build their homesteads. Remember I said I moved away from the big homestead and went to live on my place, that's the area I'm talking about.

TM: Oh

BM: It's a new farm which was bought for us by the government.

TM: What's that farm called?

BM: Masihambisane. An Extension was established in Driefontein where RDP houses were built. More sections were established like Lindelani, Tshabalala. These were some of the Extensions which were built in addition to Masihambisane. Here at Masihambisane tension arose between some of the residents and the chief.

TM: Chief Yende?

BM: Yes, Chief Yende again. When we were trying to acquire this land, the chief, on the hand other, was also approaching the government demanding to be given this land. We wondered how come he didn't make attempts to acquire it before we started making enquiries about this land. We sought information about it and finally found out who the owner was. We located him and spoke to him about his land. We then approached the government and it agreed to assist us, and said each person who wanted to purchase the land should contribute five percent. They promised to pay the rest. Indeed, each person contributed the five percent.

TM: Five percent? How much was the actual cost of the land?

BM: Each person was supposed to pay R690. And the government would pay the rest to cover the money demanded by the owner. One day... The land owner knew me very and called Mama Mkhize. Actually everyone here calls me Mama Mkhize, even by the boers. One day the landowner sent one of his workers to call me because he wanted to talk to me urgently. This boy ... what was his name? I'll try to remember his name. This boy came and told me that his *baas* (boss) wanted to see me urgently. I asked 'What does he want?' He said 'I don't know. He said he wanted to see you urgently'. I said 'But I don't have a car to take me there'. I responded 'I'll inform him and ask him whether I could come and take you to him'. I said 'Rather tell him I'm not well, so he can give you a car to fetch me'. Indeed, the boy came back to fetch me. When I arrive at the landowner's place he said 'Mama Mkhize, Chief Yende was here and he told me that he

has money and wants to buy the land you want'. I said 'What?' He said 'Chief Yende said he wanted to buy the land you've identified'. I said to him 'Look here, if you were to give Chief Yende this land do you know the number of people that would die in Driefontein? And now that you've told me about this I am going to inform our lawyer to expose you in the media. You promised us the land but now that you've seen Yende's money you want it'. He responded 'No, I don't want Yende's money. I was simply informing you because you approached me first'. I said 'Okay, please don't sell the land to him. Tomorrow we'll go to meet with government to establish the progress as far as purchasing the land is concerned'. The following day we organised a car to transport us to meet with government.

TM: Where did you meet with government?

BM: In Nelspruit, at the Land Affairs. We informed government that we were informed by the boer that he was approached by people who had money and wanted to purchase the land. We have contributed our five percent and you've promised to pay the rest. The government (i.e. officials) said 'No, don't worry. He has no right to do that. We have signed an agreement with him. He's not going to pressurise us because he had met with people who had money. Our agreement is binding. Don't panic, you'll get that land and no one else'. We left their offices, but we were apprehensive. Then I suggested to the government officials we had gone to meet in Nelspruit that they should draft something for us to prove that we had indeed met with them. We wanted to take that to the landowner. The put the document in an envelope and sealed it. Privately I was thinking these officials were giving the landowner a go ahead and sell his land. Why didn't they let us read the document before inserting it in an envelope? We agreed that when we arrived at the landowner's place he should open and read it in our presence: 'We're not leaving his place before he opened the envelope to read the document'. We returned to Driefontein and went to meet with the landowner. He opened the envelope and read the document. He then said 'Everything is fine. The government has made an undertaking that it would pay me on such and such a day. This is now between me and the government. The government would then inform you of the outcome'. It was then when we became relieved. That's how Yende lost out. But what this taught us was that the war between us hadn't ended. His role as a chief was to mediate whenever there were people fighting. You know, people would go to him to resolve such issues. He would judge that the one who had lost a case should pay the one who had won. Sometimes people were told to surrender their cattle, because they had lost a case.

TM: Where was the Board at this stage?

BM: It was still there.

TM: But this place didn't have a chief...

BM: No, it didn't. Some people would go to Chief Yende and others would come to the Board to have their problems resolved. At times you'd find that the complainant would approach the Board and the alleged perpetrator would go to the chief. As the Board we would then demand that the alleged perpetrator should come and testify before the Council Board. If they resist, we would threaten them and say 'You see, we as the Board have powers to expel you living in eKampani. We'd chase you away together with your family. Where you live it's none of our concern'. Many people were threatened by that.

TM: What were the fights about?

BM: It's a variety of reasons. Some were fighting over cattle, others it was because of children. At times it would be families. We'd sit down and try to resolve such fights. We'd advise the families not to fight and the neighbours to respect each other. We resolved these problems amicably and peacefully. As the Board we didn't demand payment from people. So many people chose to come to us. The only time we ruled that someone should pay it was when there were damages. We'd ask the accused to pay for the damages. For example, if someone's cows have gone into another resident's homestead and damaged their field, we'd ask the complainant to decide how much he/she wants to repair the damages.

TM: Was the division between the Board and Yende ever resolved?

BM: It remained like that. He was chief in his own place and I was chief in mine. Oh, one day I was in town to buy groceries at Metro. I met Yende pushing a trolley. He was stocking for his wedding. You see, custom here dictates that if you live with a woman you have to ultimately marry her. If you hadn't married the woman what that meant was that this woman wouldn't be accepted as a wife in the community. He was marrying a third wife. I met him he was pushing a trolley. I asked him 'Hey, chief ... No, I didn't say chief. I said 'Samuel, how are you?' He responded 'I'm well, Mama'. I asked him 'are you having a party at your home and why didn't you invite me?' He said 'No, it's not a party. I'm getting married'. I said 'You should've invited me. It doesn't mean because we don't agree on certain things we're not friends. We live in the same place, Driefontein. Remember we fought against the forced removals and won, while you supported them. But that doesn't mean we're enemies. You're going to marry in Driefontein and not at Babanango'. We laughed. I bought him a present, a tea-set. I rapped it nicely. Then wondered who I could ask to take it to the wedding for me. I then took it to one of his family members. Indeed I took there and requested this person to give my present to the marrying couple, because I had to go somewhere. I said 'But I should be back before lunch and I'd come to the wedding. Maybe when the presents are being presented to the couple I'd be there'. I knew very well that I wasn't going there. This person took the present to the wedding. After the wedding this person returned to inform me about what happened at the wedding. She said 'Hey, uBab' (Mr) Yende was so happy to have received a present from uMama Mkhize even though he didn't invite her' (laughs). We met again after the wedding and he wanted to know why I didn't come to the wedding as promised. I told him the meeting I had attended took longer than I thought. He thanked me for the present. I said 'This is how we should live together'.

TM: When did you finally get the land where Masihambisane was built?

BM: When did we get Masihambisane? Haai, I'll have to look for the date in my documents.

TM: But was this after the ANC (African National Congress) had taken over?

BM: Yes, when we got the place the ANC was in power. The officials came here and suggested that we should have a place where we could store our maize after harvesting, because they were running a project called Masibuyele e masimini (Let's go back to tilling the land). They argued that there were too much that was not tilled; it was not used. We shouldn't therefore complain that we were going hungry whereas we had the land to till and feed ourselves: 'Let's go back to tilling the land'. The officials promised that the government would purchase tractors and everything that had to do with farming. This was our government. It wanted to farm not only our land but other areas as well, especially on the nearby farms where our people lived. I'm sure when driving into Driefontein on your way you saw a big and tall tank on the...

TM: On the other side of the bridge?

BM: Yes. They will construct a grinding place. Actually they will buy a grinding machine.

TM: Then the maize would be distributed equally to all the families in Driefontein.

BM: This is how it works: you'd bring bags of maize and register the number of bags you've brought. So when you want grounded maize you'd go there and they would give you a ticket and supply you with your maize. Previously they used to take maize to Penbelt and you had to go to Penbelt to get your grounded maize. We complained that it was far. We suggested that they should create a similar set up here.

TM: Is Masihambisane a separate place to Driefontein?

BM: Yes, it is. You see, at Masihambisane each person owns a stand which is two hectors in size. This is the size of a football ground. This allows some people to even have their cattle and other animals to graze there and to till the land.

TM: Currently in Driefontein what are the people using the land for?

BM: The major problem in Driefontein is that the standowner cuts a piece of land for a tenant. So it becomes difficult for anyone to farm the land which is tiny in size. But others do have small gardens where they produce food to feed their children.

TM: In one homestead, for example, how many tenants could be accommodated?

BM: Okay, when I say you're yard, I mean within my ten morgen I could cut ... For example, at the big homestead (Mkhize's home) there are more than twenty tenants.

TM: Wow!

BM: Yes. But remember we have two stands there. And then another stand at the small homestead. Yes, they are more than twenty.

TM: They're many.

BM: But the space they're occupying is tiny. So we request them to limit the number of their cattle. I mean, where would they graze? And around this area there aren't many places where cattle could graze. I mean, at this point my cattle graze on CARDPOLE farm, in Piet Retief. On your way to Piet Retief there's a sign written KwaNgema, Iswepe, Driefontein and Piet Retief. After passing that sign there's another one written "Cardpole". My cattle graze on that farmer's land. I pay R4 per cow to graze there. But you have to hire someone who would look after your cattle.

TM: R4 per day?

BM: No. Per month. So it depends on the number of cows you have.

TM: So in your case it's 18 times...

BM: Times 4.

TM: Do they stay over there or do they come back?

BM: They return every day. They don't stay there. That's why he demands that you hire someone who would look after them. He farms trees. So he's particular that they don't damage his trees. Should your cows stray into his trees, you have to negotiate the amount you have to pay for the damages with him. In 2000 and ... What is this, 2013? In 2011 I had visited Germany – I have friends over there that are supporting our crèches – and my cattle strayed into his trees. He then locked them up in his yard. Bongani informed Yunis Cajee that Cardge has arrested our cattle and I wasn't around but in Germany. Yunis requested his police friend to go and plead with him to release my cattle because I wasn't around. This white person responded and said 'Why didn't she take her cattle along with her to Germany?' (Laughs) But he released my cattle and said he wanted the payment of R100 per cow. I thought he was crazy. Where was I supposed to get that kind of money? After I had returned I went to see him and I asked him what he thought he was doing yet 'you're my neighbour'. He said 'What did I do?' I said 'Why did you lock up my cattle when I was away?' He responded and said '*hayi phela* – he speaks in IsiZulu. *Hayi phela, ngizibophile ngoba wena o hambile waya eJalimane washiya izinkomo zakho engimuva. Ngabe uhambe nezinkomo zakho* (I locked them up because you left your cattle behind when you went to Germany. You should've taken them with you). I said 'hey, man you're a German citizen. Do you ever take your cattle with you when you visit your home? Unless you have your own plane in which you can load your cattle. I don't have it'. He insisted that I should've taken them with me. But said 'No, we shouldn't treat each other like this'. Then he said 'Alright, then give R100. But next time you must take your cattle with you when you go overseas' (laughs).

TM: Earlier you mentioned the role of Inkatha Freedom Party in some of the tensions that arose here.

BM: Inkatha was there. Remember when they said we should go to eBabangoni that area was known to be the stronghold of Inkatha. I've forgotten the year in which a new year's party was organised closer to my house. The old man, Ndlangamandla, and another man called Zwane... We couldn't sleep that night. I didn't know that when they had that party what was going to happen, because they were aware that I'm a member of the ANC.

TM: Oh, this party was organised by Inkatha.

BM: Yes. Themba Khoza was still alive and he was here. There were many of them who had come to that party. I'm telling I couldn't sleep that night. I mean the three of us we couldn't sleep: the old man, Ndlangamandla and Zwane. I asked Bongani 'How can you sleep when Inkatha was nearby?' He responded and said 'Mama, I'll await their move. I'll respond to their attack in the same way as they've attacked'. I said 'No, Bongani'. He added 'when these people come here they won't knock, but would use other means to demonstrate their presence to us. I'll use the same method to respond'. He left me and went to sleep. I wondered whether Bongani had a gun or not. I had my own gun, which I got from a certain boy who was a member of Inkatha... No, he was a member of ANC. He came to live this side after running away from violence in Natal. He gave me this gun. I think it was a stolen gun. He said 'Mama, take this gun to protect yourself with it if it happens that you are attacked in your home. But please don't use anywhere else'. I thanked him. I hid it outside the house, but in the evening I'd take it and bring it inside the house. He showed me how to use it. In the morning I'd take it outside and in the evening bring it back inside the house. That was my job. But when the ANC government announced that everyone who had an illegal firearm should hand it to the police. I thought to myself I couldn't do that. I was scared because I didn't know if that gun had been used to kill people before. If I take it the police would want me to show them the person who gave me the gun. I said no I'm not going to do it. I wrapped it nicely and went to the dam and threw it inside the dam.

TM: So that's where the gun ended, in the dam?

BM: Yes, I threw it in there. That's was the last time I saw that gun.

TM: Did anything happen during the party?

BM: Nothing happened. I even left my home to make tea for these old men at the big homestead. They were feeling cold.

TM: In conclusion, can you tell me a bit about the dam because you showed that it was built when you were already living here.

BM: Heyshop dam was the government's excuse, thinking that we'd think we'd be killed by water in the dam. But when it got here it found that we were a hard nut to crack. We welcomed the dam, because we said we wanted water. We needed water when we harvest, and we don't have water in our homes. We said it's okay you can continue creating the dam. We requested that the government should only do what we required for those whose houses were closer to the dam, and their graves. We requested the government first to identify a site before it creates the dam and count all those people who'd be affected by the dam so as to move them to that site. But we demanded that they should discuss all the details with Geoff Budlender and he'd inform us about your decision. Do you see up there (pointing eastwards) it's a place called Roodekraal and it's divided into two portions. But there's another place closer to the dam called Grotspruit. The people whose houses were closer to the dam were removed and settled there. And those whose houses were in old stands were removed and settled in Roodekraal. And those who lived in new stands were moved to Grotspruit. But one thing which we haven't exactly determined are the title deeds for those people. They're still in possession of their old title deeds. Now they have to receive new title deeds. Only a few of those who live in Roodekraal have them. But those living in Grotspruit they haven't received them. We went back to Geoff (Budlender) and requested him to pursue this issue with Maree who works for the LRC (Legal Resources Centre). We said he should request Maree to discuss the issue concerning the title deeds with the government, especially in relation to those who haven't received them. As we speak Maree is busy working on that issue. You see, we had earlier requested the officials from Land Affairs but they didn't do what we had asked them to do. That's when we went back to Geoff and Geoff requested Maree to deal with this issue.

TM: Did the government move many families from these areas?

BM: Yes ... When I get home I'll check for you in my documents.

TM: And what about the mine? Does it have an impact on the community and the land?

BM: The mine is not in Driefontein.

TM: Wow!

BM: The area where the mine was built is outside Driefontein. But ... Did you see that old man who came in here saying he was looking for the place where they administer people who were coughing?

TM: Yes.



BM: When they blast in the mine the houses closer to it crack. And the dust that explodes from there affects the community of Driefontein. You know, the owners of the houses closer to the mine would tell you that they no longer clean their houses. Because you'd clean in the morning, but in the evening the house would be covered with dust from the mine. And many people are now sick, affected by dust. When we try to discuss with the mine owners they don't want to listen to us. What we have realised that as the mine is operating here it's supposed to pay Driefontein some money, because it's closer to our area. But that hasn't happened. When we asked them about this, they claimed that they have been contributing some money every year. We asked them who did they contribute the money to and where is it? We argued that the mine wasn't taking any responsibility of constructing and maintain the roads; its buses always knock down kids in the road. We said we weren't sure about their contribution. I think up to this point more than 10 kids have been killed by the mine's buses. That's why we now have those small houses on the side of the road. There are people, both women and men, in those houses who help kids to cross the road. We complained bitterly about these deaths. And we asked the mine what contribution it making for the community? And another thing is that this mine doesn't employ many people from Driefontein. Many of the people employed there are from outside. These are some of the things that cause tensions between the community and the mine, because the community doesn't benefit anything from it. Right now many of the people occupying the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) houses are foreign people employed by the mine, because they don't have other alternative. Because our people are struggling and poverty-stricken, they tend to rent out their RDP houses to these people in order to raise some money. And we can't chase these people away because for some of our people they provide an income, which is far better than zero.

TM: Is the Board still responsible...

BM: The Board ceased to exist immediately after the government introduced the local municipalities. Then the councillors took over. Although they've taken over but I don't think they'll be able to work with the community as the Board did. Members of the Board were not paid. Now councillors are paid, but they do not care. And they don't like it when adults in Driefontein interfere in their business. In Piet Retief they were threatened and told that their houses would be burned. Our councillors came to inform us about this and we said "But when we're trying to inform you how we used to work here you don't want to listen to us. When you were elected into this positions you were supposed to invite us to your council meetings or consult us to find out how we were doing things her... [response to a phone call]

TM: You were talking about the councillors.

BM: Yes, the councillors. We said after you had taken over you were supposed to consult us to find out how we were operating here. But they don't do that. And now that things are confounding them they come to us to seek advice. But we say to them 'Next you must call a meeting and we should sit down and discuss these issues'.

TM: So the Board is still active

BM: No, it's no longer active. But because some people still remember some of the members of the Board who were active, like Jane (Vilakazi), myself and Madlala when there's an event they always consult us to advice them. And we do give them good advice.

TM: You come a long way indeed. From Sophiatown fighting...

BM: To the rural areas. Can you imagine?

TM: (Laughs) Thank you very much. I think the history you've given us will help us.

BM: Yes. And now at this stage this mine wants to move to Grotspruit to mine over there. We learned about this and I suggested that we should inform Maree at the LRC to stop it, because the mine that we already have hasn't done anything for this community. We don't think the new mine would be any better. So we don't want it. And if they're going to mine there what would happen to those people who were moved to that area? I mean some of them don't even have title deeds for their new places. So they must move again even before they've received their title deeds. We don't want them to move and we don't want another mine.

TM: So the force removals still exist?

BM: And it doesn't look like it'll ever end if things are continuing in this way. This issue is now with the LRC; and it's dealing with it.

TM: Where's Grotspruit from where we are?

BM: Do you see this side of the dam?

TM: Yes.

BM: There's another side of it on the other side. That's where Grotspruit is.

TM: I don't know if there's anything you might still want to discuss

BM: I don't think so.

TM: I think we've covered a lot today. If there's anything that we left out we'll make another time to deal with it.

BM: Okay. As far as our government is concerned we haven't seen much of improvement. I can mention a toilet. Obviously, one has to have a toilet. I'm talking about real development. Here we don't have water, roads, jobs. If you want to buy groceries you have to travel to Piet Retief. And to go to Piet Retief from here you pay R60 in a taxi – in and out.

TM: So it's R30 per trip.

BM: It's too much. So if we can a person ... No, not a person. But if our government can built a shopping complex for us and a garage (for refuelling) which operates for 24 hours, install high mast lights – there's too much crime here. There's a high rate of abuse of grannies and babies here. And the grannies' pension funds are abused by their children or grandchildren. Some of these children even invade the houses of these grannies and rape them, rob them of their monies and kill them. The government must intervene by building us roads, a garage, a shopping complex and high mast lights (Apollo), and deploy more police. Here when you call the police they can't come because there are no vehicles. I mean what we're having here can't be called a police station, but a satellite police station. A police station is at Dierkiesdorp and it's far from here. So we need a police station here in Driefontein, and ambulances. If there roads were well maintained then an ambulance would be able to reach my house and take me to the hospital. Now if want to go to the clinic I have to hire a car, then the ambulance would take me from there. These are some of the things that we'd like the government to do for us. I hope this is all.

TM: Thank you very much, mama.

[END]