

Black Liberations Movement Mosaic
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Black Liberations Movement Mosaic
Oral History Project
With
Mrs. Nondalana Thenjiwe Evelyn
By Vuyokazi Duna
King Williams Town, South Africa
August 12, 2008

Interview with Mrs. Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana

Interviewed on August 12, 2008

Location: King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Interviewer: Vuyokazi Duna

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Black Liberation Movements Mosaic

Vuyokazi Duna: Hello Mama

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Hello

Vuyokazi Duna: How are you?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I'm fine, how are you?

Vuyokazi Duna: I'm fine mama, there's nothing wrong. Mama can you please state your name where you're from? Why are you here?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I am Mama Nondalana Thenjiwe Evelyn and I'm from here at Zinyoke and employee here, I'm a first person to work here.

Vuyokazi Duna: So can you tell us, were you here when the clinic opened?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I know it from top to bottom. The real person who knows it is me.

Vuyokazi Duna: Tell us mama

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: You'll have to ask me questions

Vuyokazi Duna: Ok.

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I am going to speak about a leader, Steve Biko. Who tried to make people of Zinyoka to be involved in something they were not involved in anything because it was dark here but because of Biko the light came. Biko went around looking for a place just like a leader that comes from the womb of his mother Mamcete in Ginsberg. He had given up a place to build a place of health, he came here to Zinyoka, he met people of Zinyoka...Bikati Tyamzashe. Bikati Tyamzashe came to meet with the people of the church who were the leaders of this church. The father of that priest who is just sitting here, he met with the father of that priest. Mhlwatika came to meet with Mr. Tuesday Maombothi, and he said let's negotiate about his problem I want a place said Tyamzashe to Biko. Biko continued to explain what he wanted, they welcomed him as a person who came in with Tyamzashe. They agreed on the matter and took him to the priest of the Anglican church (pointing at the church) of that priest (pointing at the priest). Indeed, they welcomed him with warm hands, the community of Zinyoka did not want him they said he had a rock, they did not want the organization even the leaders of the community did not want, I did not know what did they know because they they did not know nothing but they were saying it was a rock. Indeed, the Anglican church agreed that Mamcete child Biko Bantu Steve Biko, they allowed him indeed the priest signed a thing that says Biko must be here to build here at the Anglican place, they extended it as you can see it because this is not the governments place, it is the Anglicans. Biko built in 1974 he built this Anglican church with the agreement of the priest of the

Anglican church. All of them together they chewed on this matter and agreed with each other. The house thanks the people of the Anglican church because Biko brought light to Zinyoka. Because of the people of the Anglican church. Because people in the community and the leaders could not agree in the matter. Then he built this clinic, the one that you are seeing. When he finished building this clinic people came in. I mean to say, all of these villages started from Pweelton, Balasi, Tyusha all of them attended in this clinic lots of people, I'm not talking about a baby clinic the lawn used to be full of people, people who were sick- there used to be a lot of them. They were from these rural areas, they used to give birth here, I think per day 5 babies would deliver night and day because this clinic used to run day and night 24 hours because of Biko, he built this clinic and finished building it. He saw that there were nurses and he built a nurses home for them, (she point and says) "It's down here." Biko built not the government. I am talking about the leader, he built the doctor's quarter where the doctor lived. There were 3 doctors. Dr. Ramphele, Dr. Moletsane and Dr. Solombele, they were around this clinic, those 3 doctors. They were the doctors of this clinic, we were watching. I was working here, we were 5 people, the others did the washing the others were cooking and the others were cleaning. We are here in the clinic because of Biko who had love for people. After he had done all of that , he then built the Anglican church (points at church). His way of saying thank you to them for giving the space to build in. A man came in, it was the father of the priest, he comes into the gate and was carrying a tray. I was taking it to Biko, it was coffee, Biko is staying here at the doctors quarter, when he entered he said sister in law, I replied father, he said please stand there my child. I stood. He said my child I wasn't something, I want the person who built this clinic to build the church for me, I said "shhhh..." father I heard them with my ears, even though I could not reply. They were moving their mouths saying that they were going to build the church of yours. So turn back, and he turned and went away so they built the church. The clinic used to be full, so that you can realize that Biko was an agreed leader, there was no cabinet that sat down and elected him he was elected from his mothers womb. If it was him who was still here everything would be fair because he was a man of God. I worked for him to me he was like my father and to him I was like his mother. I was working for them at the palm of their hands. I was the first one to get employed here. And the last one to leave this place because I was

the youngest with the people I worked with here in this clinic. Biko's work, he worked hard and he was not wanted, I remember one day there was a branch board meeting here, people who used to discuss matters in this organization, they came to discuss during the night and I was the cooker with another woman, police came during the night and forced people away (out). Biko and his crew were wearing long coats, big ones! They took the car and lifted it up with their hands, the policeman were fit and strong, in the morning after they had done that and left, they took us home, they took us home with the ambulance. As the people used to when they finish their labor period a person who used to live in the clinic because there was food, a person used to sleep here when she was about to give birth, she used to receive a meal and stay here for 2 days then on the third day she would be sent home. They delivered here in the clinic all these rural areas of Zinyoka. It used to be a person and old people who were suffering, they did not receive the pension because the pension was received late during those days because people were oppressed. There was a project here of making bags, people used to sew, they sewed here at the lecture room and when it was hot they used to work in the garage. It was in Njwaxa the original place but they came here to Xhamela.

Vuyokazi Duna: What kinds of bags did they make?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: They were purses that were sewed they were made by this woman and they used to make baskets on their own. There was a stipend for our kids that were schooling, they were given a stipend because they were struggling, it was hard! But the day that Biko came in there was light, they used to bring clothes from overseas and they were given to the people who are in need because of Biko.

Vuyokazi Duna: Mama, you mentioned Dr. Ramphele, Dr. Moletsane and Dr. Somobebe, the 3 of them, what was their relationship with Biko?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: My knowledge is that Biko did this together with Ramphele, they founded this clinic then I saw Dr. Molesane arriving when I was here then I again saw Dr. Somombele, they used to work together, they did turns and one doctor would do the day shift and the other doctor would do the night shift, like that they were shift sharing. This clinic used to be full of people, if one doctor had a problem, the other one would come and help the other and there was a driver so when there was a problem maybe one is getting the labor pains she used to be taken by an ambulance to Mount Coke.

Vuyokazi Duna: During those days what kind of diseases were common that make people come here?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: The kids used to have an itching rash (khwashi Yoko) hmm... (thinking)

Vuyokazi Duna: TB?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: TB no. It was not that much but it was there. It used to be flu's sometimes the child would have chicken pox, things like that, old people used to have back aches they used to have complaints, so they came to the clinic so then the clinic would be full because the medicine of this clinic used to be the best one, our medicine was so strong they were not given the medicine that is given today.

Vuyokazi Duna: As you are saying mama, this clinic used to operate during the night and there used to be meetings here...

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: (nodded in agreement)

Vuyokazi Duna: ...was there any type that you suspected that they were under the struggle?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: They were under the struggle? They were under the struggle big time!!

Vuyokazi Duna: Did they get injured? Did they come to the clinic if they were injured?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Yes, they did come when they were injured.

Vuyokazi Duna: Did they come during the day or during the night? The ones that were injured during the struggle?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: They came but we were not aware of anything because we did not know much about the struggle because we were working but now we realize that it was hard.

Vuyokazi Duna: Did the meetings take place oftenly? Were you aware of them?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: No, it was said it was a branch board meeting and we were told to prepare, we did not know that there were going to arrive during the night, so one of us would stay behind to cook for the night then we would be taken home.

Vuyokazi Duna: As a worker, do you feel that you were paid enough? (have a fair salary for the work performed)

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: we were paid, but because it was during those days, we were paid enough, it was enough for us, we were satisfied because we did not know anything beyond that.

Vuyokazi Duna: How is the clinic now?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: No, now is dead! Its dead! It shows that Biko's child is no more. He was going to build a theater in that place were they make the garden now (points out to the garden) ...

Vuyokazi Duna: hmm...

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: ...Yes, he was going to build a hospital to operate people, too!

Vuyokazi Duna: You mentioned that mama the Anglican church borrowed Biko the land so they did not sell it to him?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: no.

Vuyokazi Duna: So now I hear that the government is the one who brings the medicine and the doctors?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: When? Today?

Vuyokazi Duna: Yes, today

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: (agreeing) Yes, today, but during Biko's time there were 7 sisters but it was Biko who brought them. He used to struggle to get water, he was not allowed to get water eventually he got it from Tyamzashe's house.

Vuyokazi Duna: So I want to know that this is the land of the Anglican church and the government is taking everything, he just send s the medicine so does the Anglican church have any thoughts about closing the clinic?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: The Anglican church agreed with him (Biko) so it cannot close the clinic, the Anglican church gets help from the clinic and even during those days it used to get help from the clinic, it is the agreement with their priest.

Vuyokazi Duna: If Biko was alive how would things be like?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: It would be very beautiful. People can still remember the role that Steve Biko played because he had humanity.

Vuyokazi Duna: Is the youth taking care of the people who used to be in the struggle? Do they give respect to them?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I can say the youth of today is understanding and not understanding. Because its like this, they do not understand what is said to them because they do not get jobs, its hard. They can see that the struggle is the right thing but because they did not get any jobs they are just staying at home.

Vuyokazi Duna: During the time of the struggle, mama they used to sing songs maybe there is one song that you remember, can you sing it for us?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: (she sings)

The burden is hard, it wanted us to unite (2x)

We don't care even if we are killed, we want freedom! (stops singing, talks)

Oh man! It was painful! When you look at the kids you could see that they want something, simple as you are you could see that the thing that is wanted by these children is hard because they wanted something but the blockers, the white man closed the way. (emotionally/ almost crying/ teary eyed) I remember when Mamphetle died, we were there, he was also in the struggle and the white man killed him, I was there, I'm also from Johannesburg my child, with Biko, I'm also from Staksprurt. I'm also from Mamphetle with this Biko. I'm also from Thenji Mthintso with this Biko, who took us to Libuwa, I was with this Biko. I am talking about the struggle, one day the white man came to take these books, can you see there are these books that they write in them during the night with that machine (the typing machine). When they were coming I acted as if I am working for them I took all these books and shoved them into the white sheet, they were ransacked the entire place. I took those books and shoved them in the sheet my child, when I finished doing that I took the washing and put it beside me, then I started washing, they were still ransacking, looking at this thing that is here and I was just washing the clothes. They did not see the books because I covered them myself here. I am talking about the struggle, even though I am nothing but I could see that this thing is going somewhere.

Vuyokazi Duna: So mama, when Biko died...

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I had a feeling my child...(jumping in and not allowing Vu to finish the question) ...It was tough. It was very tough the day that he died the light faded away so much because he was a man that you could reach, he is the man of man Biko! There was no cabinet that sat down to elect him, he was elected, from his mother's womb Mamcete. He was going to be a leader, he used to say that the blood is one, the blacks and the whites... (she sings)

Zulu , Mxhosa, Msuthu unite! (stops singing , talks)

Because our blood, so we should say one thing, we should unite! I am talking about Biko!

Vuyokazi Duna: Maybe you know what happened when they tell a story what do they say happened that cause him to die?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: The white man got jealous of him, he left here, we prepared for him, for his journey, he left here with peter James I was here when they were heading to Port Elizabeth, they were leaving, he was actually going over seas but because he was taking this way (points out). Because they strangled him and killed him, because they chose, you see, the white man chose their own color, Peter Jones they left him. They took the one that they can see that what is here (touches her head) they got jealous of Biko my child because they saw that this person (nodded... meaning he was not good for them/threat). You see my child, this clinic was not built by the government it was built by this man, instead of taking the money that he got for himself and his family he put it for the development of the clinic. He wanted people to be faithful, I am talking about Biko my child. I was here 1975, the day that the clinic was opened, it started operating in February 1975, I was working here up to 2007. There is nothing that I do not know about Biko, I stayed here.

Vuyokazi Duna: How was his funeral?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: It was a big funeral, a very big funeral, I was there with the people from Johannesburg, they came to pick me up and I was at the stadium, I was there when they showed his photo and he was chained (put her hands together as if showing Vu what the photo looked like). I had his things, I put it in my apron, I collected the money and people were contributing with their money, I was there with the people from Joburg...Oh Shame Biko!

Vuyokazi Duna: Who buried him? Who was the priest of his funeral?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: The priest of that funeral, because it was so full I saw a pickup truck that his coffin was into because sometimes you do not notice, you know sometimes when you have something that is disturbing you here (points to her head) I won't say a lie and say which priest was it.

Vuyokazi Duna: Do you know the "garden of remembrance" that is in King? Are you happy about it being there?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Yes, I am happy about it.

Vuyokazi Duna: I was there, but this is the thing that gave me the pain. The thing that East London does not know Biko, that statue that is there in East London, they just placed it there, why is it not placed in its rightful place?! Here is Kings Williams Town, Biko's place, here is the Zanempilo that he built himself! I also mentioned this to them that I don't know why did you put Biko in East London, now the people are just throwing things at him, you know when the person is being jealous too, even if you are dead, they'll say you are still brighter than others. Do you know the monument, were you there when it was opened?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: No, I was not there.

Vuyokazi Duna: Did you hear anything about the opening?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Yes, I heard that at Mancete house

Vuyokazi Duna: Do you think that the youth of today is still holding on to the knot? (the struggle values, ideas)

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Not like that, I think its because of the lack of employment, they want to get employed

Vuyokazi Duna: Dr. Ramphele and the other Doctors, where did they end up?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: During the year that the clinic was overtaken, Ramphele was not there. She was banned and taken to Dzanini, then the clinic was overtaken we were taken to P.E. with our money to the Republic, the other doctors had left and we were left alone and there were sisters with us sister Moletsane, Sister Nongawuza and sister Nosokhupo. Sister Nosokhupo went overseas, maybe she is a doctor there now.

Vuyokazi Duna: Is Ramphele still alive?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Yes, she's still alive. She was just here.

Vuyokazi Duna: What role does she play a this clinic?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: I haven't heard any role that she plays because if there was a role it wouldn't be like this. What I can see is that even (referring to Biko's son, CEO of S. Biko found) Biko is not playing much of a role. What I heard is that he brought nurses, but I am not sure.

Vuyokazi Duna: Are you talking about the Biko foundation, or his son Nkosinathi?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Nkosingathi I think it's him.

Vuyokazi Duna: Does he come here?

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: Yes, he comes when he has to.

Vuyokazi Duna: Thank you mother. Listen, there is a form that you have to sign.

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: No, I'm ever ready to sign any form I'm from here. What I am saying, I'm not afraid to say it, it's something that I know, I am not taking somebody else's words and making it mine, it's something that I know.

Vuyokazi Duna: Thank you mama.

Thenjiwe Evelyn Nondalana: (standing up) when I was given a taxi by Biko, I saw people from Jo-burg opening the taxi, aah Biko!! He sent money and said buy clothes. Ooh that is a white man! Meaning he is a gentleman. I am not saying just anything, I am talking about a person that I know.

[End of Tape]