

Black Liberations Movement Mosaic
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Oral History Interview
with
Mr. Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi
By Vuyokazi Duma
King William's Town, South Africa
August 12, 2008

Interview with Mr. Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi

Interviewed on August 12, 2008

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

Interviewer: Vuyokazi Duma

Transcriber: Unknown

Language: Xhosa

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Vuyokazi Duma: Hello father. How are you?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: My child I am fine.

Vuyokazi Duma: First of all father, let me explain to you about the information you're about to give us is going overseas with these students. Another one is going to be left behind for archives and SBF. Do you give us permission to do that?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Yes I do.

Vuyokazi Duma: Would you kindly give us your name, where you're from and why you are in this place, and today's date?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: My name is Nkosinethi Kenneth Zantsi. I live here at Zinyoka, I was born here, in 1955 on the 9th of March. I'm from the Anglican Church of St. Catherine.

Vuyokazi Duma: Please tell us about the history of this clinic, what led to the opening of it?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: The clinic arrived in 1974 but I'm not sure of the date. There was a man called Mr. Biko who was being accompanied by his crew looking for a sight to place up the Zanempilo Community Health Centre. By the time it was initiated it was not embraced by the community and some of the local leaders were not into the idea because of political issues. So in this community there is a place called Onothenga [owner of the land] where the farmers live. They are the deed holders, they are the ones who own the land and they have the say about the land. Everything that is to be done had to go through the title holders. Their surnames are the Tyemzasha, the Mhwathika, the Zantsi, the Tom, the Leleni, the Makhulukhola-they combined and sat down in discussion about the proposal that was forwarded by Mr. Biko. It was discovered that another proposal of the same kind was sent to the church by Mr. Biko, of which some of these great family surnames are belonging to like the Makhulukhola, the Mhlwethika, the Zantzi and the Tyamzosha. Mr. Biko's initiative was only supported by the church but the church of the Anglican did not have the mandate to endorse the idea, so the church committee still had to consult their diocese which is in Grahamstown. The diocese negotiated with their head office in Grahamstown. The pastor here at that time was Mr. Gawa who was negotiating Bishop Barnette

in Grahamstown and it was him who gave the go ahead for the clinic to be built inside the premises of the church of the Anglican. When the endorsement was formally finalized, Mr. Biko was called to welcome him and his crew under the Anglican Church. And then the Zanempilo Community Health Centre was built, which became a sustainability issue to a number of rural areas such as Bhalasi, Peelton, Dongaba, Mbaxa, Gubeva, Nothenga -and all of these places had an employee in this clinic. The reason why the church gave the site to the clinic is because it brought help to the poor people. I even remember stipends, which helped underprivileged people. Some received clothing and food and that's why it was special to those who benefited from it. There were many difficulties when it was built because of the community's disinterest in it. The community did not want their water to be used in that process but Mr. Ben Bikati Tyamzashe was able to bring water with his own machines from his farm. They were tanks being used to store water which I think you can see when you go outside even though they are old now. They were being useful at the time because the community refused with their water. Mr. Biko continued to work in partnership with Anglican using their premises. Also, he himself became an Anglican, but in the Ginsberg region. Here in Zinyoka, it was built in mud so Mr. Biko changed it and built in cement so we were very pleased as the church about that. The clinic continued to function even though the apartheid government, it and its founders. The apartheid government was not in full control of the situation because everything Mr. Biko did was in the premises of the church. Although they tried by all means by enforcing their racial discrimination, they were not fully successful. This clinic has helped a lot of people teaching them, especially to young people because it created job opportunities for them. Times went by until the year of 1976, that's when things started to change for worse. Biko was arrested and killed in custody by the police. The Zanempilo clinic fell apart after that, which fell in the hands of the apartheid government

because Biko's partners like Mama Ramphele, who was one of the doctors and Father Msawuli, we didn't even know where they were in those troubling days. But we saw police coming to the clinic. They got in and turned the place upside down taking whatever they wanted, even the money that they helped to buy food for the poor. Now the leader of the clinic was no longer alive, it had no one to fight for it and we couldn't reach the church for help. Now that Biko was no more and the government took over, changes began to take over. The clinic used to be called Zanempilo Health Centre which changed to Zanempilo Clinic. The service in the clinic declined and there were no jobs for locals. The alliance between the clinic and the Anglican Church was broken. Now the interests of the church are no longer met, like the painting of the church. The dignity of the Anglican Church and its good deeds were forgotten. Now it is just a building beside a clinic. They no longer work hand in hand, even when there are functions. Mr. Biko used to assist the church a lot, even with funds. For now we are trying to extend the church building. If he was still around we sure he was going to find assistance for us. We were united with him and he was a humble man. Now we have challenges here at the clinic because one of the rooms is being used as a crech [daycare] for toddlers which used to be the doctor's room. The crech is struggling too because of the lack of resources. Ever since the management changed, things are not the same no more. Stipends for children in school. We still have hope that this clinic will go back to the way it was when it was called Zanempilo Health Centre and operate well. People got cured here. But now, it is not easy because there is not enough medicine for the sick and we don't know the reason why we are not given medication. It was given that when people came to the clinic they will get better. We have wishes as a church that the power of this name Biko will be restored again and the state of Zanempilo will also come back. We also would like to see the statue of Bantu Biko being erected here at the clinic because he is the people's person and a

person for all South Africans. We urge anyone and everyone who has the will, the power to bring back the state of this place like it was before.

Vuyokazi Duma: Thank you father. You mentioned that Biko was involved with Poqo [referring to the Black Consciousness Movement]. Can you elaborate more about Poqo?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: During the apartheid, people who fought for liberation of black people, they were despised by the apartheid government for fighting for equality. They were chased with dogs, arrested and killed. Some are not known where they disappeared to after being arrested till today. The founders of this clinic were also under Poqo. That's why the clinic was not wanted by the leaders of the community. They did not call it Zanempilo but they called it Zane-Rattex, which is a poison to kill rats. Meaning, they thought the clinic is bringing killings of black people by the whites.

Vuyokazi Duma: Okay father, can you tell us what kind of sicknesses were common in the clinic?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: There were people with TB, but most of it was pregnant women and there were ambulances patrolling making sure everyone was able to reach the health centre.

Vuyokazi Duma: Okay, the state of the clinic, is it still in a good state? [as it was before]

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Oh! Things are not like they used to, they have declined a lot.

Vuyokazi Duma: In terms of doctors, how has it declined? Because you spoke about doctors that went away like Mamphele. Is there a doctor in the clinic now?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: No. There is no doctor now. They say there is a doctor who used to come once a month, but he doesn't come anymore. Now, if you need a doctor, you must go to the hospital, which is very far from here. There is no phone to call an ambulance, so a patient is told to use his own transport to the hospital. Nurses here have no connection with the hospital. They have to use their own phones.

Vuyokazi Duma: You spoke about Mamphele. What was she doing here?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Doctor Ramphele was our doctor in the clinic with Mr. D. Mswali, yes.

Vuyokazi Duma: Was there any other contribution they did to the community, also were they involved in Poqo?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: They helped a lot to the people. They promoted unity among the community. They did not like the fact that this clinic was not welcome to the community. They tried changing people's perceptions towards it. They really taught us humanity to be in one "solidarity"

Vuyokazi Duma: To you father, what did Poqo mean to you personally?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: My daughter, I was not involved in politics but the name I heard often. I was very young, only nineteen then. Politics was not in my life. I was very aware of the times we lived in. We were very oppressed at those days. “Yes” and we were still in school “yes”. Our standard of education was not broad and we had no future purposes. It’s just to teach you how to go and speak English to white people and be able to beg for bread to them that’s all. There were no skills you learned for what you would like to become. You are only taught on how to go and look for a job.

Vuyokazi Duma: How do you think Poqo contributed to the liberation struggle?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: It played a major role as a result they killed its members. For example, Mr. Biko was very disliked by the apartheid government because he stood for black people, so they wanted to end whatever he did by killing him. Many people died, after that people grew anger more and more for the loss of great leaders like Biko who died fighting for their freedom. Really, there were just people who were disliked by that government because of standing for the truth.

Vuyokazi Duma: In the times of Poqo there was lots of singing of liberation songs; is there any songs you remember?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: My daughter, as I was not that much into politics, mostly I was involved in the church as a server at the time, but I heard young people singing. So even though I heard them, it's hard to learn them when you are not singing them.

Vuyokazi Duma: Yes father, when they sang these songs, did they do something inside of you?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Yes they did, because when you hear a song's message, you hear that this song is sad, you feel it, because this song talks about the life you live in. Yes, when there are things like you are not welcome in some places and you must ask for permission to travel, maybe to Port Elizabeth to the magistrate, who was Payikhe at the time. You go and sit down with him and say "Chief," I would like to go to Port Elizabeth for my friend's funeral maybe. It was not nice to always have to beg every time you have to go. But today, you can just go to Cape Town or take a plane if you feel like it without anyone stopping you. Black and white people had different identity documents, those were hard times, but today we all are the same.

Vuyokazi Duma: How do you feel about the name changing of streets and towns?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: In this changing of names my child, it depends on what reasons are behind. Like our school here at Zinyoka, the Bikati Tyamzashe High School was named [after] this man because of his contribution to the community. He wrote songs [for] the school choirs in the community, like the song "Bisho Ukhaya a lam" [Bisho is my home]. Now if they were to change Bikati into another name that would hurt me a lot because we named this school by a person who contributed to our struggle. I'm not against the changes so far because I think those

names that were changed did not have any meaning, but these changes will be a good history for our coming generation. We will be able to tell them when they ask about these names.

Vuyokazi Duma: So if father, you were asked what would you like to see being built here or being demolished here what would you say?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: First of all, we are still thrilled to have the people's government, even though we still have lots of challenges like poverty, like sick people who need medication, people must have employment, and the crime rate is high- like theft that is caused by the unemployment. Now these firms are closed [and] there's no work because they belonged to white people who closed them down. Now [an] important thing our government would do is to reopen those firms [because there are] people who worked in those places who can continue with it. Yes, we do hear and see on T.V. about the people who we believed that they would look after us with money. But we saw that they are looking after themselves and we get nothing more from them. These things give us hard times which makes us to thing back, ust like the Israelites who wanted to go back to Egypt because of situations were worsening. My wish is that government should find a way to stop this money laundering into the cabinet so that these monies can reach the people who need it because people are hungry down here, so we as the Church it's hard for us but we preach and pray for sick people but they are hungry and we cannot help them.

Vuyokazi Duma: Is the youth of today still on the same spirit as the older day? If not, how did they lose the spirit?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: The youth of today is not going with the same pace. As they are not going with the same pace, I think the reason for that is they are greedy, because if they are given a task because now they used projects so they have to be a group. So when they are a group they get the project. Because there is money that they get from these projects, you will find that those who are the leaders of the group, two or three of them who have an understanding of what is going on in these projects. So they would suggest that anything that involves money should end between them. So that makes anything that was planned by the group not to succeed. So that disturbs the youth in some way, even if they get a chance to get skilled. When they come back they cannot use their skills because there is no place where they can use them. So even though they have the skills but they cannot use them. They sit at home with them. Just like the educated people, they get their degrees then come back and sit at home with them, because they cannot use their education. So that's when the youth get disturbed.

Vuyokazi Duma: Are you proud of where your country turned out to be?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: I am very proud of my country. As I am proud of it I love it because it is the country that has no differences one person and another. That's the thing that I love most because even now when it was hard, that there are people who are fighting each other, telling each other that they are outsiders [referring to xenophobic attacks], immediately they were called into order to show that this was not a good thing. And I think that happened because people are hungry, so the hungry people decide to make this mess thinking that hunger would go away. They even took their belongings. So, I love this country because everybody is welcomed to do what is important and in need of the people. That's what makes me to love my country.

Vuyokazi Duma: You mentioned that during Biko's time, when the clinic was a health centre, there were bursaries [stipends]? Are the children who were studying with that bursary still alive, what are they doing?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: There are still children who studied with that bursary, some of them. Others have passed away, those who [are] still alive, there are few of them who are in good places. Most of them are doing nothing. They did not finish their studies because the bursary ended.

Vuyokazi Duma: What role does the government play in this clinic?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: The government at this clinic. Even though I do not have the full information. Because the church and the clinic have no connection with each other anymore. So, I do not know much. As a person in the community, there is nothing much that the government does because sometimes there is no medicine. And most of the time it is hard to get the ambulance. So as a patient, you have to get out of the clinic and organize a car that will take you to the hospital. So, that means that the service is very poor.

Vuyokazi Duma: During the struggle, what did the women do? As the men were in the struggle.

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Their role was not noticed. Most of the time, they worked in the kitchens. Like my mother, she worked at the kitchens for thirty five years growing us up as her

children under the kitchen work. Many women worked at the kitchens. Yes, I remember very well, they used to wake up at about three o'clock in the morning and they would go to the kitchens in groups of two or three. Others used to stay at home.

Vuyokazi Duma: When the women made a march, how old were you?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: I think I was five years old or six. Because I think this happened during the Sixties, so I think I was eight years old, so I was still young.

Vuyokazi Duma: You were not even told of what happened exactly?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: No. Nobody told me because my mother was not into these things. If there were people who made marches, they did that privately. Sometimes, you would hear about it in the radio's and television, or one woman would talk about it, but I do not have much information.

Vuyokazi Duma: Is there anyone else you know who was involved in the struggle?

Nkosinethi Kenneth Zandzi: Yes. There are Mr. Rhgi, his son was in the organization called Umkhonto we Sizwe. They live here at Zinyoka, so they can tell some stories.

Vuyokazi Duma: We are done. Thank you for your time.

[End of Tape]