

Black Liberations Movement Mosaic
Under the direction of:
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Black Liberations Movement Mosaic
Oral History Interview
with
Ms. N. Zantsi
By Vuyokazi Duna
King William's Town, South Africa
August 12, 2008

Interview with Ms. N. Zantsi

Interviewed on August 12, 2008

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

Interviewer: Vuyokazi Duna

Transcriber: Unknown

Language: Xhosa

Translator: Unknown

Black Liberation Movements Mosaic

Vuyokazi Duna: Hello ma'am.

Ms.Zantsi: Hello sister.

VD: How are you?

Ms.Z: I am fine sister, how are you?

VD: I am fine too ma'am, ma'am before we begin I want to tell you that I am doing this interview for Dickinson College in America. Do you have a problem with them taking this information?

Ms.Z: No, I don't have a problem.

VD: Okay, there's a form for you to fill-in when we are done, I would like us to continue.

Were you here when this clinic was opened?

Ms.Z: When the clinic was opened I was here I think I was about 13 or 14 years old, so I could still remember what was going on.

VD: Can you tell us a bit about it?

Ms.Z: When this clinic started the land belonged to the Anglican Church, it was during the apartheid when parties used to hide because the leaders were interrogated. Luckily I was the member of the Anglican Church then I heard about the BCM which was with Steve Biko who were asking the church about building a clinic here on the church's land, there mission was to help the community. I can see that the Anglican Church had a link with the politics because they gave them permission to build the clinic, then a big construction company arrived to build the clinic and many people from the community were employed. At the opening of the clinic there was a big ceremony and they showed us who were going to be in charge of the clinic, Steve Biko and doctor Ramphele were also present on this day and at the time there only three buildings here the clinic, the house of Doctor Ramphele which is now the crèche and also the nurses home. When they came here we the Anglicans were attending church in a mud building, so when they were building the clinic they also built us a brick church and we were so happy about it, the clinic continued but its status now is nothing compared to what it used to be before. There was a Labour Ward people

were giving birth here, there also was an Ambulance because the place we live in has slopes the Ambulances used back then were Land-Rovers so after giving birth you were taken home. The clinic used to open 24 hours you could arrive at the clinic even at 12 midnight, I gave birth to my first born here in 1979 and I was only 17 years old then. We were the school kids of the area when we come back from school we used to come here at the clinic to get a meal, we had our favorite dish which was samp with white beans and everyday we would come here and also our mothers used to work here making mats and other material which looked like mats there was no one sitting at home doing nothing everyone was working. The transport to town was always available the cars were always transporting medicines. When I passed standard 5 I was told there were fees available at the room on the veranda there is a social worker by the name of Phumla Simanga. We used to take our results to her in January and she will give us cheques to buy books, school uniforms and school shoes. I knew Steve Biko personally because my mother used to work here at the clinic doing what I thought were projects, he and my mother had the same clan name which was Mgcina and that made us very close to him even on the Monday we hear that he has passed away he was here the Friday before. We were deeply hurt to hear that he has passed away although we were still young we could see the role he was playing in our community, it was quiet for a while I think that people were scared. Here were two teams and some didn't like what Steve was doing they were with the apartheid government, when they saw Steve Biko here they would go and call the police and we as the children we would watch as the police take away Steve and Mrs. Simanga. I mean it was nice back then but on the other side it was very bad.

VD: You spoke of doctor Ramphele. Please tell us more about her.

Ms.Z: Oh! She was a very nice woman anyone could get to her she was like a doctor, when you come to clinic she would see you at the doctors room. She was very nice and you would tell her anything freely, if a patient came to see here she will never forget that patient's name and when you came to clinic you knew that you had a friend.

VD: What was her relationship with Biko?

Ms.Z: Since I was a child back then and because I see doctor Ramphele in politics I think that was the connection between them, I don't know if that was the case but they were both here.

VD: So you say the crèche used to be her house?

Ms.Z: Yes it used to be her home no one knew it would turn out to be a crèche today.

VD: What happened that made it become a crèche?

Ms.Z: After 1994 there was something that was like a crèche here at the church, at the time the nurses home and the doctors house were vandalized so the community thought there should be a pre-school and it used to enter at the church house. Then Steve Tshwete's wife arrived then she wondered what was happening in the doctor's house as she saw that we

had a crèche in church, we told her nothing was happening there and she was the one who gave us permission to have our crèche there.

VD: What do you do at the crèche?

Ms.Z: Eh! I assist the nurse.

VD: How many children do you have at the crèche?

Ms.Z: When we registered we had about 160 children but it was discovered that we had many children for two care givers then the crèche was divided into two groups and the other was opened on the other area so now we have two crèches.

VD: What the name of both crèches?

Ms.Z: At the time we had two names to decide from, there was a local hero who was Skhenjana Roji and also the history of Biko. I think we agreed on Skhenjana Roji but after we have registered some views rose and the Skhenjana name was defeated and it became Steve Biko. And because we were already registered we are still trying to change the name Skhenjana Roji to Steve Biko Pre-School, but these things take time.

VD: Okay, you said something about BCM, what did it mean to you?

Ms.Z: Since I was young a the time I think Steve Biko was trying to uplift black people by his vision.

VD: So do you think if Biko was still alive would be pleased with the way the clinic is today?

Ms.Z: No, he wouldn't be pleased I think if the clinic was still ran by them it would be in a higher place, because those Ambulances which were transporting patients are no longer here and also the things people used to do are not happening anymore people are sitting next to their houses. And the busaries are all gone.

VD: So are you comfortable with the changing of names?

Ms.Z: Very much, I am comfortable because the names that were here before didn't include our leaders, only the leaders of apartheid so now I'm very comfortable because our people's work are shown.

VD: Who supports the crèche, who is giving you money?

Ms.Z: The crèche is supported by the Department of Health and Welfare who funded us in 1995 by giving each child R2.50 for a meal a day but they are giving us R9.00 a day per child.

VD: So a child has one meal a day?

Ms.Z: Yes they eat once a day.

VD: So when does the crèche open and close?

Ms.Z: We start at 8 o'clock in the morning and come out at 2 o'clock in the afternoon that's why we say to parents give your children lunch.

VD: Do you have a medical box since you are dealing with children?

Ms.Z: Yes we do have a First Aid box.

VD: Who gives it to you?

Ms.Z: We use the money from Welfare to buy the important stuff.

VD: What role does the clinic play?

Ms.Z: When we have a sick child we take them to the clinic even if there's something we don't really get about the child we quickly get help.

VD: How Steve Biko personally besides the BCM since you've spent sometime with him?

Ms.Z: Biko was very nice, very generous when he got here he used to speak to anyone, he love people very much and he always had a friendly smile

VD: If anything could change what would you want it to be?

Ms.Z: Oh! The thing that affects us the most is not working especially the youth, if the Steve Biko projects were still here the crime rate wouldn't be so high.

VD: Which diseases are very high here?

Ms.Z: The disease that is the most high in our community is HIV & Aids, with my little knowledge I think its said that HIV causes all the other diseases like TB what I mean is people are not healthy because of HIV, children are orphans because of HIV.

VD: Which diseases where high during the opening of this clinic?

Ms.Z: It wasn't like before and since we were young it was not always you find people everywhere talking about a disease like it is today, there were diseases like TB and others but they were curable. In children there were missiles and chicken pox which were cured quickly.

VD: How many doctors did you have?

Ms.Z: It was only doctor Ramphele.

VD: Is there a doctor now?

Ms.Z: Yes there is a doctor who arrives once a month.

VD: When does the clinic open and when does it close?

Ms.Z: It opens at 8 o'clock in the morning but closes at 4:30 in the
afternoon.

VD: Are the nurses from here?

Ms.Z: Most of them are not from here especially the sisters all of them are not from here,
but there are people from the community who are social workers.

VD: You as someone who is nearby is there a role you play?

Ms.Z: Yes there is a role I'm playing because there is a project here at church which I am
involved in, we spoke with the nurses about the people who come to get their treatment to
pass-by the church and receive some vegetables and the sister gave us the treatment date.
We even tried the soup kitchen but because there is no money it ended.

VD: Thank you that was all, so you agree that we expose the information?

Ms.Z: Yes I don't have a problem.

VD: We will leave it at Steve Biko Foundation, at Fort-Hare at the archives then they will take the other information to Dickinson College.

Ms.Z: No problem.

VD: We are finished now thank you.

[End of Tape]