

Race and Education Mosaic
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Oral History Interview
With
Chulumanco Mlamli and Siphokuhle Mathew Nkonkie
By Nyree Addison, Lucy Richman and John Morrow
King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa
21 August 2015

Interview with Chulumanco Mlamli (N2) and Siphokuhle Mathew Nkonkie (N1)

Interviewed on August 21, 2015

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

Interviewers: Nyree Addison (I), Lucy Richman (I) and John Morrow (I)

Language: English

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I: Could you guys...

N2: Introduce ourselves?

I: Yes, state your names.

N2: My name is Chulumanco Mlamli, I'm 18 years old, I was born on the 15th of June 1997. I'm a Gemini [N1 laughs]

I: So am I.

N1: Sweet.

N2: And this is my friend. Introduce yourself.

N1: I'm Siphokuhle Mathew Nkonkie, I live in East London. I'm Mlamli's friend. I'm also 18. I was born in April and I'm an Aries, I live in [unclear] and I study at Dale.

I: So do you think your school is successful overall?

N1: I think our school is successful because we have like 154 years of history now and like, we have, like, world-renowned people like Mr. C.B. Jennings and doctors in

Zimbabwe. We've got people who've started a lot of clinics and programs in the Western Cape. So I think... when I came to Dale and found out more about Dale, Dale was really successful and in the coming years I'm sure it will be more successful.

N2: There's a lot of good facilities. If you look at the structure and how the school is formed it's actually like, sort of like a military school overall. If you look at the soldier there behind you, John, this actual place is actually the hallowed courtyard. It's where all the soldiers' ashes are buried and stuff, you know. But the school is actually successful in terms of sport and academics.

N1: Culturally, too.

N2: Yeah, culturally too. But we don't have music.

N1: We've got the best choir.

N2: We've got a good choir. It's actually diverse because it's actually black and white, everyone here actually has fun, you know, nobody feels segregated.

N1: [Same time] There is togetherness. We try promoting unity from all grades.

N2: [Same time] Togetherness, we all try to motivate each other.

I: No discrimination?

N1 and N2: No there's no discrimination.

N1: You know like we're all people. I mean you'll get some of those guys [hand motion].

N2: You'll get haters.

N1: So we try, as the Matrics show, to instill that unity. Like, okay guys, we're all wearing the same blazer so it would be wise if all of us were to gel together. [Wind blows papers off of the table] You want to cut that dude?

[Break in the interview as interviewers and narrators collect papers]

I: I wanted to ask what kinds of extra-curriculars you have here. Do you have sports, what kind of sports?

N2: Yeah we have extra-curriculars. We have hockey, rugby, tennis, squash. We've got cross-country. And everybody tries to take part with the sports. My friend actually was a rugby player.

N1: I was about to tell him that I will be taking from where he left off because I've been playing rugby from like grade 8 and stuff. I've played 14 A's and 15 A's and 16A's. If you're 14 you play for the under 14's, if 15 then the 15's. And then if you go from 17's and stop playing 2nd and 1st team, whatever. [Wind obscures audio] We have archery where you like shoot and stuff.

N2: No that was long ago.

N1: And what do you call it? Oh yeah, rowing, we have that.

I: Do you stay after school a lot for these sports?

N2: Yeah, we actually do. We actually have a track down there.

N1: It's an athletics track.

N2: Yeah, an athletics track. And we have the hockey astro where we go, you'll see later today. And we've got a rugby field. We're actually concentrated on rugby, if you could say that, but we've actually got other sports.

N1: Like rugby is sort of like the main attraction to like people and sponsors.

N2: If you're going to stay tomorrow you should watch the game, we're actually playing Queens.

N1: Queen's College, they're like a rock star school.

N2: Yeah, like a rival school if you could say that.

N1: Another thing I was about say about the sports, we have a lot of naming, like we name the places. There is CB Jennings Athletic Track, we have BN Rawls Swimming Pool.

N2: And our main rugby field where our first team plays is called "the graveyard." That's where the other team gets to be buried.

I: Do you find that a lot students stay after school for help with teachers?

N2: Okay, well with teachers I wouldn't actually say that we stay after on the school grounds. Like after school there's actually like nobody. Well, there's a few people who stay after for their classes, right? Like a teacher would have said to a specific group, like, "You must come to my class after school to do some extra work or something." And that will be the case, right? But people are most of the time at the fields. But we have a computer room.

N1: But there are people, like what he's trying to say is, there are so many people so busy with sport and there are some people studying. There are so many people

busy with sport and other people are just bookworms who stay in class and the sport guys go to the gym or the field and various other places.

I: You said you have a computer lab, what other kinds of labs do you have? Are there science labs?

N1: Well we have classes that are, like, well they're not science labs but they are places where you can conduct, like, experiments. So, yeah.

N2: But we have the computer lab... but we don't have many labs if you could say that. We've got a gym, a weightlifting gym, on that side and on the other side the computer lab where we do CAD and work with other technology. I do that subject.

N1: He's the hacker, [laughs] only joking.

N2: But that's really the only type of lab we have.

I: How would you normally get to and from school every day?

N1: He's from a hostel and I come from East London every day so that's like a mission if I could say it because I used to catch a taxi from the [name of church unclear] Baptist church and then from there into town and then I would jog up to school. That would keep me fit for rugby, I'd get a heads up before practice.

N2: I live in a hostel at the moment right. I used to live... and the hostel is close to school. About a two-minute walk to and from school right? Before, in grade 11 last year, I lived in Mdantsane. Remember I told you about it? It's the second biggest township in South Africa.

N1: After Soweto.

N2: After Soweto. I used to stay there during U16 right, and I used to wake up every single morning and come to school. It's a little bit closer than East London, right, but it's far. Like we would wake up very early in the morning and come to school.

N1: I wake up at five o'clock. I'm an adventurer.

I: Do you find that coming to Dale is expensive?

N1: Well, from my parent's side yes and I also think it's expensive. The people that I go to school with are my friends, well not my friends but the scholars say "my mother's paying this and that and my mother's paying this and that" but it's not like we're bragging, we're just being open about what is happening. Yeah, the school's is expensive. We have the facilities. In South Africa we don't have the facilities you guys have there. But we have the best facilities of the school's around here, locally.

N2: Our school's actually well renowned around South Africa.

N1: We even have like All Blacks, some guy's who've played for France like Andrew [last name unclear] and I mentioned the guys like, who's that guy? Mr. Peter de Gaulle? What did he do?

N2: No.

N1: He came in for a speech one day and those are the guy's who just come to Dale and Dale's associated with a lot of known people.

N2: If you heard the principle in the assembly, he was talking about the Ole Dalean Union. It's like when you leave school, right? Like when you leave school for matric and you apply for the Old Dalean Union. It's like you never leave the school.

N1: It's like you're always part of the family. Unity.

N2: And then every year there's a reunion.

N1: It's like the school's birthday.

N2: And it's very busy here on this courtyard and there's a whole ceremony.

N1: They call it a reunion assembly.

N2: Yeah a reunion assembly.

N1: So it's special that they do it on this courtyard.

I: What are some of your favorite subjects?

N2: Favorite subjects?

N1: He does history and I also do history but my favorite subject is English because that's the number one communication in life. And I also want to do politics and I want to communicate with everybody and it's the universal language.

N2: English and History, right? And business studies and CAD. Because that has to do with computers and I actually learn a lot from reading. Actually one thing I found out is that if you want to have [wind obscures audio] and have a bit of understanding you have to read books more. And often read, like you shouldn't read every once and a while. If you read constantly, you actually increase your vocabulary and your speech.

I: Do you have a lot of textbooks available to you?

N2: Yeah we've got all the textbooks for every subject.

N1: Yeah, we do have textbooks. We pay a book levy and then we get textbooks from the school. They produce textbooks here at school and give them to us so we're sorted. We don't have the hassle of "Ahh, I need to buy this textbook or get that," or anything like that. [Unclear]

I: What are your favorite teachers? Tell us about your teachers.

N2: My favorite teacher is... well I actually like all my teachers at school. What I was actually telling myself was that I have to be motivated and happy every day, coming to school and greeting everyone. Having that approachable feel, you know? People mustn't be afraid of me or tense, you know? I aspire for confidence. I was actually saying yesterday that we're digging for gold, right. Are we digging for gold? I just thought about it and we are digging for gold. Gold is greatness. So we have to strive for better things like every day.

N1: I think Mr. Tesmo was one of my favorite teachers. He taught me a lot, like back in the grades I wasn't very good. I was mischievous, you know? But Mr. Tesmo put me in the right direction but at that time I didn't understand. I was like, oh, what is this teacher doing? But now that he's gone, I see his place and I look up to Mr. Tesmo for having taught me all those things because now that I'm an adult and a man I know what to do thanks to Mr. Tesmo. See, when people like that leave, it's disheartening because there's no one left to look up to. But another one is Mr. Griffins.

N2: Yeah, Mr. Griffins.

N1: He stuck to us, he taught us nearly everything we know on the rugby fields.

N2: Yeah, he's a rugby coach.

N1: And Ms. who do call? Ms. Mobb, she's just an English teacher. Yeah, she gives us a lot. She gives us a lot because we don't want to study sometimes and she just wants to get the information to us and to empower us and stuff.

I: So, you like all of your teachers?

N1 and N2: Yeah.

N2: Especially Mr. Osmond.

N1: Mr. Osmond!

N2: Because he's our history teacher. I like the way he teaches us. He's like, how do you say?

N1: He's like a walking textbook.

N2: Yeah, a walking textbook because he doesn't really need to hold the textbook or read it. He just says what's on his mind. He actually gives you more insight than what the textbook would give you. And I feel that history is a subject that I actually excel in. I actually like knowing about olden day things. I was actually looking at a video. I was actually watching a video yesterday.

N1: The one about [unclear]?

N2: No, one on Haiti. That Haiti was one of the greatest civilizations of the world before modern times. It was the America and Haiti that had, it was the first two declarations of the world that were ever written were America's and Haiti's. Slavery and the slave trade, yeah, I actually like to learn things from the past, you know? Because history repeats itself, you know?

N1: What was that about Mississippi that were learning yesterday?

N2: Hey.

N1: What was that about Mississippi that we were learning yesterday? It was about history.

N2: We were learning about the, the Jimmy Lee Jackson.

N1: Jim Crow laws and stuff,

N2: Yeah, Jim Crow laws.

N1: Montgomery boycotts, oh yeah.

N2: And we were checking out on Joe McCarthy. Don't you remember, we were checking out the Crucible, so yeah, we watch videos about that.

I: Do you think that your teachers greatly impacted your achievement?

N1: Well yeah, like they gave us most of the notes. I mean we like to do research on our own and compare stuff being the people that we are, so yeah. I feel as though they empowered us but also credit to ourselves because we put in effort at the end of the day.

N2: And we like to have an input in class because you know there is that, you know there are people who are afraid to ask questions or to talk in class. But I actually like to be forward and ask questions I class to get more input and actually show the teacher that I am interested. We actually try to do the same thing every day. We're actually good friends, you know?

N1: It's like if you don't know how to fall then you can never [unclear] yourself. If you've never stumbled, you don't know what the fall is like.

I: Do you know your pass rate for the Matrics? Is it high?

N2: It's pretty average, I'd say.

N1: It's pretty average because as time has gone by the standards have deteriorated. But we try our best to keep ourselves in our places for everyone to see. When someone sets an example everyone looks up and says, "Wonderful are those two guys."

I: What is the average do you think?

N2: 60% to 70%, 80%. Yeah.

I: 80% average?

N1 and N2: Yeah, 80% or 70%

N1: For the Matrics, for the whole of the Matrics that's pretty average. They were used to getting 100% every year, that's what they were used to, so yeah. That's why we were saying that there is a lot of history, 154 years of history. It's culturally, academically, and in sport, so yeah.

I: What do you guys want to do? You said you wanted to be a politician? What do you guys aspire to do when you leave school, go to university?

N1: Yes, I want to go to university in England. I applied to the University of Leeds but I'm not sure what they're going to say. I'm hoping for the best but yes, I want to study first so I can figure out what to do or how I can best become a politician.

Trying to get a few connects and doing my thing so yeah, knowledge from primary, knowledge from high school and knowledge from tertiary.

N2: I actually want to do psychology for my major.

I: Oh, I'm a psych major.

N1 and N2: Really?

N2: that's very interesting, I'd like to do psychology and probably IT. I don't really know what I want to do but it seems as if I can go along with psychology because it's a great field. It opens up your mind, actually. Actually knowing a bit about it to [unclear]. It's actually beneficial and it's mind-blowing how we can figure out new thoughts and how people think and how you do your things - and the environment.

N1: Yeah, just the whole of the belief system.

I: Do you think where you come from effects your education?

N2: It actually does. It actually does.

N1: Yes. We're both from East London. We're schooled in East London the both of us.

N2: I actually went to Hudson Park Primary for my primary school. He went to Crewe Primary School.

N1: The headmasters are like brothers.

N2: Yeah, both our headmasters are [unclear].

N1: Mr. Norman [unclear name] and Mr. [unclear name]. Basically the same systems.

I: So you mentioned the primary schools. Are those really well regarded like Dale is?

N2: Hudson Park is very well... its got high standards actually. Crewe Primary is actually a primary school, right; it doesn't have a high school. But Hudson Park is a primary school and a high school and we actually were playing with them last week at... in East London.

N1: And we got a whacking.

N2: Yeah, we got a whacking. So yeah, they're pretty good schools. I would actually want to take my daughter or son to Hudson Park for their primary school and maybe come to Dale for their high school. It's actually a good foundation. That's where I learned most of my things, you know, most of my vocabulary, most of my...

N1: [speech covered by wind]

N2: Yeah.

N1: Crewe and Hudson are like brother schools. Its like Dale and Dale Junior but its just like Hudson has a high school and Crewe is just a feeder school... [speech covered by wind]... but Mr. [unclear name], the things he taught us, I just thank him when my physics teacher, Mrs. [unclear name]... [speech covered by wind]... taught me everything I need to know. I came here knowing litotes; no one really knew what litotes were like paradoxes and stuff so I thank them for that, yeah. So I feel as though we are comfortable... [background noise]... it kinda made me into who I am today, so yeah I'm very thankful for my primary school.

I: What problems does your school have?

N2: Well, problems.

N1: We get the problems that most schools get. Since we're all boys – you know that all boys or like all females in one place wouldn't be good. Too much of anything is never too good. So like you'd get those guys who are trying to be women... [background noise]. You'd get those who wouldn't want to learn, you'd get some freaks who are constantly daydreaming about [background noise] and so you get a few of those kind of people.

N2: You get a diverse type of people; you get the same type of people in every grade. It's actually different, you know.

N1: Yeah. It's more so in the lower grades and I think that they just have a lot of glucose in them. [wind covers speech]. But they like [unclear] so I'd see the grade 8s as the more like serious guys and the Matrics but you get those Matrics who are like I'm old enough to do what I want to do, yeah.

I: Would you say its easy to get into Dale?

N1: No, it was very hard for me to go to Dale. I remember I had to wait for like two weeks before I even got like a note. And then that note wasn't confirming if I was getting taken or not, I just had to come for an interview and after the interview I got taken into Dale for orientation.

N2: Actually I had to wait a few months.

N1: Its like standards.

N2: You have to have good marks actually if you want to get into Dale. They actually take the standard of learning and how much you know, your knowledge...

N1: And like what do you know about Dale? When you come to Dale you write a new boys' test. Like it's basically out of 100 and the pass mark is 80. So like you have to know more about Dale, and you must have a feel for Dale before you even come here. Like how to be a Dalean at the age of like 10. I was in grade 4 at my primary school and I had wanted to come to King, to school here at Dale, like yeah, I feel as though the standards... I mean, not everybody gets to become a Dalean – a college boy.

I: At some of the other schools we visited, there were a lot of students who had been held back in different grades, so there were a lot of older students. Is that the case here, or are most of you following the standard track?

N2: Most of us are actually complying with the age, right. Most of us in matric... we actually have probably two students that failed in previous years, but most of the people that we started with in grade eight or nine, we're still in the same classes and the same grade. Nobody in our grade or our '97 generation failed.

N1: Basically we don't have much failure. We were the best grade eight group, like 2011, with a lot of unity...

N2: And it was actually the 150th year of Dale in 2011, so it was actually a good year for Dale.

I: Do a lot of kids go on to.... [Background noise]?

N1: Yeah, like I'm seventeen in grade 11, I'm eighteen in grade 12 now, yeah that's the case. But there are people in some of the grades, like I mentioned in grade 12 there are two guys who aren't eighteen; they're older than that.

I: And so then how many students, after matric, go on to university?

N2: Most of them. I would say most, because in South Africa if you don't have education it's really hard to go anywhere. So education is key. Knowledge is not power, actually, if you use the knowledge you have then you get it to work for you. But if you only know [unclear]...

N1: Yeah, Dale also provides a family environment. Guys who don't get into universities, they offer them posts like on the rugby field or to help out with the team. Or like during physical education they'll go to the gym or have a period for soccer and they'll [unclear] or carry balls or just something basically to do for Dale, like just a contribution.

I: Does Dale have some sort of financial aid for students who can't pay the fees?

N1: Yeah.

N2: Yeah, exemption, as we call it, exemption. I think its when you... like if you have a single parent, like my father passed away, right, so I only live with my mother and I have a little brother here at Dale so I think we're going under that same procedure but I'm not sure.

N1: Yeah, like the bursary fund: I was [unclear]... there's a bursary fund for rugby, and for academics, and for music and all those... they try to promote fairness so you won't get bursary only for academics. If you're good at a sport, for example, [wind covers speech]...

I: So you have to be an athlete or a really, really good student to get aid?

N1: Yeah, yeah.

N2: Yeah.

N1: So we have requirements for bursary.

N2: And we have a little of both in school. Because like most of our students actually do sports, you know, you don't get the lazy types. They play rugby. We actually play on the weekends, and you have to be on a team. [unclear]... on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, practice.... It's cold in shorts and socks and actually falling down on the ground.

N1: But, hey, dude it has to be done. I mean rugby players...

N2: Do you mind if we ask you some questions?

I: Yes, of course.

N1: I would like to ask, how many semesters do you have?

N2: Yeah, siblings.

N1: No, like how many semesters.

I: Per year?

N1: Yeah.

I: There's two semesters per year.

N2: I actually read in the dictionary, what do you call it? I actually read it... what is it called? I actually read it.

I: Our national anthem?

N2: No, I actually know your national anthem. The semesters, when it's half-year you actually call it something.

I: Summer break?

N2: No.

I: We do have summer school.

N2: Aweh. But what do you call it, the half year? What do you call it?

I: Semester?

N2: Yeah, semester. But what do you call it?

I: At university, we have two semesters but in high school we have four terms.

N1 and N2: Oh, okay.

Interview ends.