



Project name: "Voices from below: An Oral and Photographic Community History of Tembisa Project"

Date of the interview: 10/10/2010.

Location of the interview: Winnie Mandela Section (Tembisa)

Language of the interview: Sepedi

Length of the interview: 58:25

Name of interviewer: Mmatjatji Malabela

Name of interviewee: David Malabela

Name of translator: Mmatjatji Malabela

Name of transcriber: Mmatjatji Malabela

Audio file name: TEM\_MalabelaD\_20101010

## Interview with David Malabela

M: Malabela Mmatjatji

D: Malabela David

M: Hi Mr. Malabela, firstly I would like to thank you for giving me the chance to conduct this interview with you.

D: Ok.

M: Before we can start with our topic, I would like you to tell me about yourself. Is not that much difficult, because you only have to tell me all your names, where have you born and when. Is not exactly the interview, is like a discussion. We discuss a lot of things but you start by telling about our life.

D: Ok, my name is David Kgashane Malabela.

M: When have you born?

D: Oh, my age is so confusing, because the one on my Identity book is not my real age. Is too little than I am.

M: Why your age is like that?

D: My father is the one who was made my age so little.

M: Why did he do that?

D: He did that because he wanted me to go to school, they didn't want the old aged people at school.

M: You mean you have started schooling late, at the old age?

D: Yes, I didn't go to school early.

M: What is your date of birth on your identity book then?

D: I was born in 1958, but that's not my real age.

M: Do you still remember which year was that, when you start schooling?

D: I think it was in 1964, if I am not mistaken.

M: By that time were you staying here in Tembisa?

D: Yes, I was here in Tembisa.

M: Were you not having a birth certificate, which will prove your age?

D: I was not having it.

M: Where were you staying before you can come to Tembisa?

D: I was staying at Dindela.

M: When you come to Tembisa for the first time, how was it looks like?

D: When we came to Tembisa for the first time, It was a having the four roomed houses, the shacks and also the farm.

M: Where was the farm situated and where were the shacks?

D: There were lots of shacks at nearby Oak moor station, which was staying people who are waiting for their houses and then the Farm was at Ivory park and Winnie Mandela.

M: What made you move from Edenvale to come to stay here in Tembisa?

D: We have moved on that time of Apartheid, when the Boers remove my father and tell him to go to stay at Tembisa because it was near to his work place.

M: Where was your father working?

D: He was working at Norton Company.

M: What kind of house were you living in at Edenvale?

D: We were living inside a shack.

M: How many rooms does it have?

D: It was one big room which was divided by the curtain in the middle to make it two rooms.

M: How were you sleeping?

D: We were sleeping at the kitchen, on the floor because that house was divided in to two rooms. The other one was a kitchen and the other one was sleeping my mom and dad.

M: How people were grouped in Edenvale?

D: We were not grouped, were mixed. There was the Zulus, Xhosas, Pedi, Coloureds, Tsongas and Venda's.

M: How about the discrimination, people were not discriminating one another?

D: No, they were not discriminating one another. The lifestyle was great.

M: At which side were you living in?

D: I was living at Mofokeng Street and then after we moved to Mbule Street.

M: Did your father also stayed in the shack, while he was waiting for his house?

D: No, we didn't stay in a shack, just found his house ready for us to get inside.

M: How was it look like, when you get it?

D: It was just a four roomed house with only two doors at the back and in front. It was not having the doors in the bedrooms and was not plastered on the floor and on the walls. My father did everything on his own with his money.

M: Was it called Vuk'uzenzele, or was it changed?

D: No, it was already changed. It was called Tembisa and Tembisa means *Tshepisa* in Tswana and in English is a promise.

M: Tell me, how was the lifestyle of Tembisa and when compared to the one of Edenvale.

D: The lifestyle was the same; the only difference is that there was a lack of shops, but it got improved as the time goes by. And at Edenvale everything was so simple for us because we were used to it.

M: Which shops were you using here in Tembisa, as you say there was a lack of shops?

D: We were buying goods at Mbhele shop, Thabethe shop and the other one was at Sithama section. That's the shops I knew.

M: What do you think was the main cause of that lack of shops?

D: No, the problem was that Tembisa was a new township. So everything started smaller.

M: And then how about the shops of Edenvale?

D: Edenvale is an old township; we were having a shop at every street. I still remember the one which was on the street that I was living at, it was called Evelyn Tuck Shop.

M: Is it true that Tembisa had a lot of crime?

D: Yes, it is true. The crime was high, because there was lot of gangster groups who was robbing people for their goods and they were also killing people. It wasn't safe for people to walk around at night, because they were doing that at night. Even to knock off late at work, was not safe, because those thugs were so dangerous.

M: Do you think that Edenvale was so dangerous just like Tembisa was?

D: No, Edenvale was not that bad, those things were not there. So Tembisa was worse because every time people were got killed and robbed off their staff.

M: Don't you know those people who were doing that?

D: No, you never know them. We will just hear that the police have found the dead bodies that might be killed last night. That person will be buried and no arrest will be made and after some few days they will found another one on the street. It's so sad to think about that, because many people have lost their loved ones on that time. At Edenvale there was the group of gangs, but they were better off than Tembisa.

M: Do you still remember those groups of Edenvale?

D: Yes, I still remember others, but they were mixed with the gangs of Alexander and their names were the "Msomi gangs, the Vultures, the Spoulas and the G&G gangs"

M: Why were they mixed with the gangs of Alexander?

D: I don't know about that, but I only understand that Alexander is nearby Edenvale. Maybe that's the reason why they combine. Those thugs were also dangerous, but people were not killed that much as Tembisa does.

M: Don't you know any group of gangs here in Tembisa?

D: I only remember two of them.

M: Which are they?

D: There were the Top 7 and the Toasters.

M: All those Tembisa groups, were they not fighting among themselves?

D: I never heard about that, but I think they liked each other because they were capable of doing the same job. They were the friends. And the other thing I know about them is that they didn't want to see anybody from different sections at their section.

M: What will happen if I go by force?

D: You are worse, because you are a lady. They will simply do terrible things on you, for example, they will rape you and if you are a man, they hurt you, because they were always having weapons on their selves. Everyone was supposed to stay at their sections.

M: Why would they do that?

D: They will tell that we do this to you, because you are not staying there and even next time you will learn to stay at your place. If you can see clearly, all those sections of Tembisa was divided according the

languages that people speak. At Maokeng, Tshepo, Tsenolong, Makhulong, Sedibeng and Northing section and others that have not mentioned are the sections which were staying all the Pedi speaking people. And Umthambeka, Xubeni, Emfihlweni, Ndulwini and Khalambazo are the places which were staying the Zulu. The Tsonga were staying at Sithama. I think that thing made the situation worse because it wasn't simple for us to go to the other sections. Out of all these sections I've mentioned, Khalambazo was the most dangerous place than other sections.

M: Why do you say so?

D: I say this, because the people of Khalambazo were doing a lot of crime and they were not having any fear. They were doing it in the middle of the day and in front of many people around. This name of Khalambazo means the "crying an axe". They were stabbing people with an axe so that they could rob them. That place was not a good place to be. I think the people of Khalambazo were the one who do crime at other sections.

M: Ok, tell about your parents now, were they working?

D: Yes, they were working but my mother never worked for a long period. She just worked for few some months. My father is the one who worked for a long time.

M: Where was your mom working?

D: She was working at Isando at some other company called Themba nyathi.

M: Why didn't she work for a long time?

D: She just quit, because my father didn't want his wife to have a job, he wanted her to stay at home and take care of children.

M: Where was your father working?

D: He was working at Norton Company at Isando next to the brewery.

M: What was happening in Tembisa, at those apartheid time?

D: We were living a difficult life, because the boers didn't want to see anyone doing nothing during the day. They were forcing everyone to go to work. They were going around this entire place looking for the people who are staying at home doing nothing.

M: What will happen if they found you sitting at home, doing nothing?

D: They will arrest you.

M: What will you do if you can't find a job, because is not that much simple to get a job?

D: If you can't find it, you must keep on hunting until you get it. People were given a special, that indicate that you are looking for a job and if you got it, your employer would sign it every months so

that police can see that you are working. Their law was so difficult, but it was helping because there was a lot of job opportunity.

M: That police who was going around looking for those who were not working, were they getting inside your houses or were they just passing by the streets?

D: Some other time they were getting inside and start to search everywhere and sometimes they pass by the street. The police, who were going around, were the Blackjacks.

M: Where were Blackjacks working?

D: They were having their offices at Kopanong section, but now is Old age Welfare.

M: Why do you call them the Blackjacks?

D: No, it's not me. That's their names and people knew them with that name. People were scared of the police in those times of apartheid; more than 50 people could be arrested by one police officer, because they feared them.

M: How possibly can arrest one person?

D: You have to remember that the police were not having cars, they were riding the bicycles.

M: How did they arrest them, while they are on the bicycle?

D: If he arrest you, he would tell you to follow him on his back and if get the other ones along the way he would tell you to make a queue. You just follow him walking with your own feet, while he is riding a bicycle.

M: There weren't any police cars on that period?

D: They were there, but they were fewer and the police were used to the bicycle because that's their first method of arresting people.

M: What other challenges you have faced?

D: The other challenge that we have faced is the one that when police force us speak Afrikaans and even at school it should be our first language. And they wanted us to speak Afrikaans most of the times. That was so challenging.

M: Tell where have you started school?

D: I started school at Sedibeng lower primary and thereafter I went to Moriting primary.

M: Which grade have you reached at school?

D: I only reached standard 4. I never got a chance to study.

M: Do you remember which year was that when you leave school?

D: I can't remember exactly, but I think it was 1970 or 1971.

M: Tell me more about the issue of the burning down of the beer halls, where were you on that time?

D: I was here in Tembisa and the problem started when the boers forced the student to study Afrikaans at the school as a first language. The students from all schools of Tembisa gathered and discussed that they should strike and fight against Bantu Education. That's where the conflict started. The people who have burned those beer halls were the students.

M: The police never found out that they were meeting and discussing to boycott?

D: No, if the police have found out that they were meeting and discussing the politics, they would have arrested them before they do that.

M: Out of everything that is in Tembisa, why do they choose to burn the beer halls?

D: They were fighting the apartheid government, so they were burning the government's property. Those were the government's buildings which is the reason why do they burn them. There was no black man who was allowed to own a beer hall on that time.

M: How did all that go?

D: Everything turned so badly, because many children were killed and only few of them escaped death. It was so noisy outside of the gun shoot. After some few hours the police called the soldiers to come to the scene to help them kill those children.

M: Did the soldiers manage to come?

D: They came with their big cars, which we call the hippos. When they arrive there, they just started shooting everyone who was there because they think that you were also involved on that.

M: Do you still remember which year was that?

D: Ehh, I think it was in 1976.

M: How about that one people use to say that many people have been killed at Oakmoor Station, do you have any idea about it?

D: Ja, I think you mean that time when the taxi owners were fight among themselves, because that was also a serious problem. Many people have died on that time.

M: Why the taxi drivers, [what] were they fighting for?

D: I can't comment much on that one, because I just heard people saying that they were fighting for the line of taxis. Other taxi owners wouldn't let other to carry people with their taxis. As I've said that I



won't comment a lot on that issue because I am not well informed about it, people would say a lots of different stories.

M: Do you believe that the police were having their spy, around here in Tembisa.

D: That is the point, there was the people who was always spying for the police because if can remember people were killed by the police at their home. That shows that there was someone who was telling them that who was doing the politics and who was not doing them.

M: What did people do when other people were killed at their homes, were they just seated and do nothing about that?

D: That's when people become angry and start to burn the Metrorail train at Tembisa Station.

M: How did they burn it?

D: They just took the big heavy stones and putted them on the railway line at Tembisa Station so that if the train comes, it shouldn't have a place to move on and when its stops they will burn it. It was so sad because people were angry and uncontrollable.

M: Did they manage to burn it down?

D: Yes, they burned it. When the police come, they found that it was already burned down and they started shooting everyone with their fire arms and with tear gases and tell them that they should disperse.

M: What happened after that?

D: After they have burned it they killed the driver and there after they started boycotting that they don't want any government transports and no one must go to town to do shopping.

M: Why didn't they want people to go town doing shopping?

D: I think it's because all those shops at town are for the whites only and they treated us bad and on the other hand we are giving them the support.

M: Were you also involved in the politics, going out for the meetings and do a lot of strikes?

D: No, I was not involved with that. I was scared that I might get killed, because many people who were doing that are now dead. I don't want to lie to you; I was a coward on those things.

M: Is there anything that you have witnessed that had happened on that time of apartheid?

D: Yes, I have seen the one which was happening at Tembisa Station when those people have burned the beer hall next to the Tembisa Station, but I've seen them mistakenly because I was from work and when I arrive at Tembisa Station I found the soldiers helicopter lingering around and when I look on the floor I saw the dead bodies of the children who were helping burning up the beer halls.

M: As you say that you were there, can you briefly explain to me what have you seen?

D: The only thing that I have seen is that I saw people taking out the goods at that shop and others were taking out the beers splitting them away and the police were continuing shooting. When I ask people why they did that, they told me that is because they were boycotting. While I was waiting there at the station, some man got killed and he was standing next to me.

M: What did you do when you saw that happened to him?

D: You know what, I just ran straight to home because I was so scared and I couldn't believe it.

M: Didn't you know that there would be a strike on that day?

D: No, I didn't know because I was not attending their meetings.

M: Why were you not attending the meetings with them?

D: To go the meetings was not safe, because the police didn't want to see people sitting in groups. If they found you sitting in groups they would shoot you with tear gas and tell you to disperse. I hate to be followed by the police everywhere I go. Most of the people who were attending those meetings were the comrades and I was not a comrade.

M: As you say that there was the discrimination, so tell me how you were coping at work because your boss is white and whites and blacks were not getting along with each other. How were they treating you at work?

D: We were not having a problem at work; our boss was treating us very good that you wouldn't imagine that we are the blacks. The problem was with the police and they were doing that at the townships not at the work place.

M: Is there any comrade member that you still remember, who is staying around here?

D: I don't remember them. It was a long time ago, I can't remember them.

M: How about their meetings, you don't know where were they holding up their meetings?

D: No, I don't know where they were doing their meetings because it was a secret. They were doing them in private place where no one can see them and they were doing them at night. If you are not a comrade you won't know anything about them.

M: Where were you working at that time?

D: I was working in Isando.

M: How did you get that job?

D: I just took my identity book and go out to look for the job. And at that time we were using a dompas and a special.

M: Were you using the dompas on that time?

D: Yes, I was using the dompas.

M: Do you still remember those days when lot of people we getting killed at Emfihlweni cemetery?

D: Yes, I do remember, it was that time of the Toasters.

M: Can you please tell me what had happened on that time?

D: The Toasters was a group of gangs, who was doing a lot of crime here in Tembisa. They were staying at the hostels.

M: What kind of crime were they causing?

D: They were killing people, robbing people their goods at night, they doing the house breaking and they were also raping. They had made the big story here and people remained shocked about that story.

M: What have they done?

D: They went to some other tavern and found the old men and women sitting down, drinking their beers. When they get there they told the owner of that place to out all the beers inside the fridge and put them down. After she took them out, they told those men to open them and pour them inside one big bathing bowl and then after they forced all those women to take bath with that beers, in front of that men. After those women have bathed they took a jar and gave it to some other man and tell him to drink that beer inside that bathing bowl. They told him that he must drink it and give the one who was next him to drink it, and when he is done he will give to the other one next to him. It was so shocking and very embarrassing, because they did that to the older people.

M: Why did they do that?

D: They did it, because their leader Yster instructed them to that.

M: Who was it?

D: Yster is the group leader for the Toasters. He was the one who tell them what to do or what not to do. He was so cruel that's why the youth of Tembisa and other people didn't want him to be buried at the Emfihlweni graveyards.

M: What did they do to him, because they didn't want to see him buried at their graves?

D: They dug up his grave and throw away his body on the street.

M: How can they fight many people at the shebeen and people just admit what they do to them and never fight back?

D: You will never fight them back, because they were having the guns and they were pointing at them. The people at the shebeen were not having a fire arm and any weapons with them.

M: What had happened after that tragedy happened at Tembisa?

D: After that, many people stopped going to the shebeen and many more were staying at their homes because they were scared of him. And the other thing about the Toasters is that they didn't want to see anyone wearing the All-Star shoes.

M: Why didn't they want to see anyone wearing it?

D: They didn't want to; because they were saying they are the only ones who have the rights to wear it.

M: Why were they staying at the hostels, not at their homes?

D: they were hiding, because at their homes the police find them easily.

M: Where were the police when those thugs were busy, bothering the nation?

D: The police were there but they couldn't find them, because they were staying in hostel and the people were scared of giving the police information about them so that they could take them to jail. If the community members have helped the police, they would have arrested them.

M: Was that ok, when they tell people not to wear an All-Star shoes, according to your opinion?

D: Ha ha ha!! Just imagine the naked woman bathing inside the beers and in front of many men, that was ridiculous. About the All Stars shoes, was not good about it because there was a time where when we meet someone wearing it, it means that person is a "Tsotsi" or a gangster.

M: When those woman bathing, were they using the bathing soap or not?

D: No, they were just bathing with those beers only. They were not using any bathing soap.

M: Were they having the face cloth?

D: No, they didn't have them.

M: Who have killed Yster, their group leader?

D: He was killed by people, but I don't know who they were.

M: Where they have killed him?

D: I am not sure about that one, but I think they have killed him at the tavern if I am not mistaken.

M: How many of them in that group of Toasters?

D: They were many and I don't know the exact number of them. I remember one day I met with them in the night on the street, I was from Hammanskraal and I get here late.

M: What did you do when you saw them?

D: There is nothing I could do on that, they were so near that I could not even run away. The street was so empty that no one could help me. I just walked the way I was walking and there after they said to me that; hey groot [big] man, wait there, and I waited for them because I was so scared and shaking.

M: What did they do to you, when you waited for them?

D: They searched me and find no money inside my pocket and thereafter they took my belt and tell me to run away and never look back, because if I look back they would shoot and kill me.

M: Where did you meet with them?

D: I met with them at Oakmoor Station, but I was from the taxi rank that is next to the station.

M: After that have [you] ever go around at night?

D: No, I never repeated it again, because I found out that the only thing that made them to leave is that; there was some other guy who knew me better and he was also a toaster member. He is the one who told his members not kill me, because he knew me.

M: Who told you that?

D: Is that guy I am telling you about, he came to me and apologies. But he also told me that I should stop it because one day it will happen to me while he is not there to cover up me. He was so concern because if he was not there I would be killed by now.

M: Have you ever stopped walking around at night?

D: Yes, I stopped it, because I was so scared on that day. I never wanted to see it again.

M: At which hostel were they staying at?

D: They were staying at Ehlanzeni Hostel, next to Vus'Muz location. They stayed there at that time when the hostel inmates were fighting.

M: What were they fighting for?

D: They were fighting to take over the four roomed houses, because there were some four roomed houses which were functioning as the hostels, so they were tired of being the hostellers, they wanted to own the houses. Even those who were staying inside the hostels, they wanted to have houses of their own.

M: Do you still remember which year was that?

D: Not exactly, but I think it was in 1992 or 93.

M: Which houses were the hostels?

D: All the four roomed houses at Kopanong section were the hostels and some at Makhulong section were also the hostels. You have to remember that all those four roomed houses were owned by the government, no one was supposed to build a shack outside it and put someone to rent with the permission. When they give you a house, they would always give you the rules also.

M: Who won that battle, between the hostel inmates and the people who were staying in those houses?

D: Some of the hostel inmates won that battle, because they ended up owning that houses, which were the hostels. And others never won them, Since they started to stay at the hostels long time ago and even now they are still staying there.

M: As you have told me that the group leader of the Toasters, Yster, have died, what had happened to the other Toaster group members after his death?

D: The group started to be powerless and dissolve. Other members were killed by people and other has run away from home, because they were afraid that people will kill them. Since from then the crime in Tembisa started to decrease.

M: That shows that all the people who were staying at the hostels were the gangsters and they were hiding at the hostels?

D: No, not all of them were the gangsters. Others were not the gangsters, but majority were the gangsters.

M: How about the Sethokga hostel, the thugs were not there?

D: The situation at Sethokga was much better, because there were no many thugs like at Ehlanzeni hostel. The problem was that; the Sethokga inmates were fighting against the Ehlanzeni inmates.

M: Why were they fighting against each other?

D: They were fighting and they were divided to their languages. At Ehlanzeni hostel they didn't want to see any Pedi and Xhosa speaking people, because they were in favor of different political parties. The Zulu who were staying at Ehlanzeni hostel were in favour of Inkatha (IFP) and the Pedi and the Xhosa at Sethokga were in favor of ANC. That created a lot of tension between these two groups, because everyone wanted his favorite political party to rule.

M: How did that fight affected the other inmates who were not in favor of politics?

D: It has affected them badly, because many people have been killed on that time. Others were not even involved in politics; they were just the inmates only.

M: What other thing have happened in those time of apartheid?

D: The other thing that I remember is that; there was a helicopter which was bombed here in Tembisa. They bombed in while is up there at the sky and it was passing by and then it fell down on the ground.

M: Was it for the police or not?

D: No, it was not for the police or the soldiers. It was just the helicopter that was flying high up the sky and then the people saw it there and bomb it to fell on the ground.

M: Who actually did that?

D: I am not sure, but I only know that it was the boys and girls who are staying here in Tembisa.

M: Where did it fell to?

D: I think it has fell at Entshonalanga section.

M: How did it fell?

D: It has gone down and fell into some two houses around there and smashes those houses into pieces.

M: Where were you when all those happen?

D: I was here in Tembisa. Many people ran to see what had happened, but I didn't go.

M: Where were the people who were living in those two smashed houses?

D: When they heard the noise out there, they took away their children and ran away so that it will not fell on to them.

M: Do you remember which year was that, when all those happened?

D: It's a long time now, I can't remember the year. It's too difficult for me to remember the years.

M: The police never found out who did that?

D: As far as I know, there is no one who was arrested on that case. The police never found the people who did that.

M: Where were you staying in that time?

D: I was staying in the shacks which were called the Honey Park at Raba ridge, next to Mayibuye location.

M: When were you staying there?

D: I stayed there, before I can come to stay here at Winnie Mandela.

M: Ok, tell about Winnie Mandela. How did it start?

D: Winnie Mandela was a place which was full of bushes and trees and it wasn't named yet as Winnie Mandela. We are the ones who named it, when we came to stay here.

M: Who came up with this name of Winnie Mandela?

D: It was some other man who was staying at Hospital View, but now he has passed away.

M: Do you remember his name?

D: Now I don't remember, but if I do I will tell you.

M: Why is he the one who name this place?

D: He named it because he is the one who made it possible for us to get this place to stay. We gave him the money and he gave the land. He decided on this name of Winnie, because she is one the woman who fought for us to have this freedom we are having now.

M: That means that Winnie Mandela is not the old location at Tembisa. It doesn't have many years just like old sections of Tembisa?

D: No, is not the old location.

M: When does it started?

D: It has started in 1994.

M: And then when have you start to stay here?

D: I have started with it from the scratch, in 1994.

M: When you start to stay here, how was it looking like?

D: As I've said before that it was bushes before, we just started by cleaning it up and removing all the bushes and trees away. But everyone was doing at his or her own place, of which he was given.

M: How were the houses you started living in, how was it look like?

D: We were living inside the squatter camps and they were far from each other, they were only few and there was no electricity and there was no water supply. This place was so dark at night and we were getting lost some times because we were not staying here for a long time, it was a new place which we were not getting used to.

M: How were you living without all those things you have mentioned?

D: We were living a very difficult life because we used to fetch water with wheel barrows so that we could drink and do some other home appliances. We were using the coals to cook with; the place was so smoky in the late time when people start to kook.

M: Where were you fetching the water with those wheel barrows?

D: We were fetching them at Maokeng Extention, but we were paying for it.



M: How much were you paying for that?

D: We were paying 50c per one bucket of 20litres. And the other thing is that the roads were not there, we did them on our own.

M: How about that many baby boys were killed here in Tembisa, is that true?

D: Yes, is true.

M: Can you please tell me more about that?

D: Yes, that was the Inkatha people who were killing them. They killed them because they didn't want them to grow up and become the soldiers one day.

M: Who was sending them to do that?

D: I don't know who was sending them, but I know that they were wearing the red belt on their forehead, when they go to kill children.

M: Where were they staying at?

D: They were staying at the hostel.

M: Is there any children who they have killed?

D: Yes, they killed many of them. And there after people started to take their children to police station, where they would be under the police guard for safety.

M: How about their own children, were they also killing them?

D: No, didn't kill them because they left them back home.

M: Why were they wearing the red belt on their forehead?

D: That's their sign of knowing the group members, so every time when they are going to fight they wore them and that red means for danger.

M: What were they killing them with?

D: They were having different weapons every time and they were carrying them everywhere they go. On that period the mortuaries were getting full of dead people. The people were fighting the police and on the side they were fighting among themselves, instead of been together and fight apartheid boers.

The police were giving everyone a tough time to live. They would start to shoot out to the students without any valid reason. I was staying next to the high school and I remember one day the police and soldiers started to shoot at the students, and they ran in to our homes and others were taking the "has back" to protect themselves with them. They were like the bullet proofs, because they protecting against the bullet.

M: The police never noticed that those “has back” were like the bullet proofs?

D: They noticed that after a long time.

M: What is a “has bark”

D: A “has bark” is an old rubber dumping. The thing that was used to close that dumping it was called the “has bark”. That “has bark” was so strong like the bullet proof, if a person has that thing you won’t shoot him.

M: So tell me about the rent boycott, what was happening there and why the people of Tembisa were they boycotting?

D: They were boycotting against the rent increase. The rent was so high on that, because the municipality was not checking the actual gauge that people have used, they were just telling that this month you pay this much and next month’s they will tell you another amount that will be more than the previous one. It was increasing every month, and people were complaining about that.

M: After that boycott, what did the municipality did with that matter as the people start to boycott?

D: No, they didn’t do anything, the residents just stopped to pay rent and electricity. They were tired of paying a lot of money every month.

M: Where they having electricity at their homes, as they were not paying?

D: Yes, they were having it and they were using it for free.

M: They used free electricity until when?

D: They used it for the long time, but I don’t remember until when. But the problem was that even though they were not paying for it, the bill was going high every month. You can’t believe if I can tell you that some are still paying that even now and other have finished paying not so long. Other people have lost their houses on that issue, because they were not paying for them so they were kicked out of the house.

M: Who came up with the idea of boycotting?

D: Is just the residents of Tembisa as a whole who came up with this idea, because they were the ones who was suffering about that.

M: Where were the municipal offices on that time?

D: The offices were that one at Rabasotho. People went there in mob holding up the plaques that says “we won’t pay rent”.

M: When that rent increases every month, did the government know how much the owner of those houses were earning?

D: No they didn't know and they didn't care about it. They just wanted everyone to pay the amount they told you to pay at the end of every month.

M: On that rent boycott, people were not killed. That's why the municipality changed that old electricity in to the pre-paid electricity. The old style electricity was creating a lot of conflict, because they would tell you that you owe R300 for the electricity that you have used. Sometimes you find that you were visiting somewhere and when you come back they would tell you that amount that you haven't even use. The prepaid one is so good to use, because you can see how many units you have used and how many units that has left.

D: No, they were not killed.

M: As you were staying near Thuto ke Maatla high school in Maokeng, the police were not bothering you every time when they go schools?

D: They were bothering us so bad, because they were coming to the school to see whether there is no people who are discussing the politics during the school hours.

The life was so tough then, because those soldiers who were going to that school were sometimes getting inside my home, sit down and ask for something to eat. You will give them everything you had because we were scared of them. If they come in and find any children who didn't go to school, you will tell them the good reason why your child didn't go to school.

M: Were you staying with them and have fun with them?

D: No, I couldn't do that. Those people were so scary; no one was talking to them until they go away. If I see them coming I would run away or hide myself under the bed until I hear that they have left.

M: Why did the soldiers watch out the students for the whole day?

D: They didn't want to see them having meeting at school, because they thought that they would discuss the politics and the other thing is that; they were afraid that they might burn down the school, because every time the students boycott they burn properties or the Government buildings. Their duty is to make sure that everything is safe.

M: The students were aware they were under soldiers guard?

D: Yes, they knew it but it didn't stop them to do meeting and strikes at the school. I think that was a waste of time, because they were those children were not scared of them and they were doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. They were not fear death.

M: Ok I thank you very much for letting me do this interview with you.

D: Ok that's fine.

M: If there is some information I need from you I would come back to you. For now I think we should end our discussion right here.



