



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

Date of interview: 29-11-2010.

Location of interview: Winnie Mandela-Tembisa.

Language of interview: Sepedi.

Length of interview: 1:09: 19.

Name of interviewers: Mmatjatji Malabela and Tshepo Moloji.

Name of interviewee/s: Fosi, Rebecca Sibanyoni.

Name of translator: Mmatjatji Malabela.

Name of transcriber: Mmatjatji Malabela.

Audio file name: Tem_SibanyoniFosiRebecca_20101129

TM: Tshepo Moloji

MM: Mmatjatji Malabela.

Interview with Fosi, Rebecca Sibanyoni

TM: Today is the 29th of November 2010. I'm Tshepo Moloi with Matjatji Malabela

MM: And Fosi Sibanyoni.

TM: We're at Winnie Mandela section in Tembisa ...

MM: Zone 4.

TM: I'd like to take this time to thank you for giving us this opportunity to do talk to us about the history of Tembisa. To start off, can you tell us who you are and where you were born.

FS: I am Fosi Rebecca Sibanyoni. I was born here in Tembisa. What I remember about the history of Tembisa is that I was a member of the Youth ... I was actually part of the Youth's Street Committee. I was attending all the meetings in different places. When all this fighting started it's when many children were killed. Then we attended night vigils and funerals. I can still remember there was a year – it's just that I've forgotten which year it was – at Mathole cinema at Lifateng seven young people were killed there. The boers attacked us in that cinema and shot us with teargas and sneezing gas. Many young people were killed and others were hospitalized. We ran away. I went back to my parents' place. Later we buried them. We were living in fear, always on the run because the boers were shooting us with teargas. Then a certain boy from Soweto was killed. He was removed from Soweto where he had been buried to be reburied in Tembisa. Actually there were three boys who were buried here. Their parents looked for them all over but couldn't find them. They were not even buried in coffins but they were just thrown inside the graves. Rumours started making rounds that there were three boys from Soweto who were buried in Tembisa. It was said that they should be excavated, so that their parents would be able to rebury them in Soweto. Some people went to

Rabasothis to inform the authorities that there were boys from Soweto who had been buried in Tembisa but now they wanted to excavate them to be reburied in Soweto. The authorities said to dig up one grave costs R3000. And this meant for three graves it would be R9000. But parents refused to pay that amount, arguing that their children had been killed by the boers and were then buried without their permission. They said they didn't have that kind of money. Not long Tembisa was teeming with boys from Soweto, Alexandra, Springs, and other places. They went to Emfihlweni at the cemetery. They dug those graves up. Their corpses had rotten. Remember that their bodies were just thrown into the graves and piled with soil.

MM: Was it in a single grave?

FS: Yes, in a single grave. There three were piled on top of each other. You know, at the time teargas and sneezing gas ... I remember that at the time we were staying close to the cemetery. It was really tough for us. Whenever there was a funeral we were not supposed to close our doors. We would leave them wide open so that when the young people came running from the police they would be able to come inside the house. Should they find that your door was closed when they came running from the police after the funeral they'd 'visit' you in your house. They could even burn down your house just for having locked the doors. Doors were always supposed to be left open. This happened every weekend, because there was a funeral every weekend. We were supposed to leave our doors open and place buckets full of water outside. You see, after the police had shot teargas it would make their eyes itch so they would use that water to wipe their eyes. They would sometimes put their t-shirts in the water and wipe their eyes and faces with them. Yes, the three boys were excavated and taken to Soweto to be reburied there. We, from Tembisa, went to Soweto to attend the reburial. There were many of us. I can still remember when we went to catch the train the police were chasing us. Then we were living a tough life. We reburied them and returned to Tembisa. Funerals were the worst times ever.

There was a law that was passed which stipulated that black people were not supposed to drink liquor, particularly your castle beer. They were only allowed to drink at the municipality's beerhalls. Then young people decided to attack and damage these

beerhalls. Some were even burned down. This was because many people were suffering because of these beerhalls. Yes, black people were told what to drink and ...

MM: Oh, it was white people who decided

FS: Yes, they stipulated black people were not supposed to be drink beers. They had to drink liquor which was produced in the beerhalls. We carried on like that until such time when it was said young boys were no longer wanted ... Oh, this started in Spruit. This was during the time of Inkatha [Freedom Party]. Members of Inkatha went house to house and when they found a young boy they would murder him. Then I had moved to Maokeng [section]. Mpumi's grandmother took Bobo – I have a son named Bobo – to Rabosotho hall to hide his there. Many families did that. They would dress their sons as girls to disguise them so that the members of Inkatha would not identify them. They slept at Rabasotho. Everyday his grandmother would go to Rabasotho to visit him and take him food. She didn't want him to come back home.

MM: Who were they staying with there?

FS: With the police. There were many boys there. They were given blankets and food. They slept over there until the members of Inkatha from Spruit left Tembisa. They had come to Tembisa to fight with the community.

MM: Why were they killing young boys?

FS: You see, they wanted to kill them while they were still young so that they don't grow up to become comrades. Remember that members of Inkatha opposed the ANC (African National Congress). At the time the ANC had many supporters and Inkatha didn't. They were afraid that when these boys grew up they would join the ANC. In actual fact Inkatha was fighting against the ANC. So they started attacking young boys.

TM: May I take you back a little. You said you were born in Tembisa, when was that - the year you have born?

FS: I was born in 1969, 24 October.

TM: And where was family staying?

FS: At Welamlambo.

TM: Who were you staying with?

FS: I was staying with my mom, dad, and my little brother.

TM: I don't know whether your parents used to tell you where did they originally come from. Do you know?

FS: They came from Dindela.

TM: Do you remember the year they came here?

FS: From Dindela to Wela'mlambo they came in 19 ... My father was born in 1950 ... [silent – thinking] No, I don't remember.

MM: But when they were staying in Dindela were you staying with them?

FS: No, I wasn't. I was born here in Tembisa. At that time they were staying at Welam'lambo section at my father's parents's house.

MM: Okay. Can you please tell me what kind of place was Wela'mlambo and what kind of a house were you living in?

FS: It was a great place for us to stay, and we were living in a four-roomed house. We lived there until we moved to Emfihlweni section in 1974.

MM: What's the main reason that made your parents to move from Wela'mlambo to Emfihlweni?

FS: We were staying in our grandfather's house until my father got his own house at Emfihlweni.

TM: Were your parent working at the time?

FS: Yes, they were both working.

TM: Where was your father working?

FS: He was working at Sebenza.

TM: What kind of work was he doing there?

FS: He was painting the PUTCO (Public Utility Transport Corporation) buses.

TM: And then your mother, where was she working?

FS: She was working at ... What do they call this place? They were doing fibreglass. I don't remember. But I think it was in Edenvale.

TM: Where did you attend school?

FS: I attending at Welam'lambo primary school.

TM: You schooled there until when?

FS: I don't remember exactly the years. It's been a while now.

MM: Okay. You attended there until which grade?

FS: I attended there until Sub-B (Grade Two). I think it was in 1977, if I am correct.

TM: When you moved from Welam'lambo primary where did you go?

FS: I went to Enquweni primary school.

TM: To do Standard ...

FS: One.

TM: Why did you move from Welam'lambo primary to Enquweni primary? What was the main reason?

FS: Welam'mlambo was too far. Enquweni was closer to where I was now staying, because by then we had moved to Emfihlweni. We were no longer staying at Welam'lambo.

TM: You went to Enquweni until when?

FS: I went there from Standards One, Two, Three, Four and that would be until 1980. Yes, in 1980 I was doing Standard Four. The school went up to Standard Four. Then I went to Siphwe in Sangweni to start my Standard Five.

TM: You attended there until which standard or grade?

FS: I ended up in Standard Seven. It was called Form Two then. After my mom passed away I had to leave school and take care of the kids at home, because there was no one to look after them.

TM: Can you remember some of the things which were happening at Siphwe when you were doing your Form Two (Standard Seven): anything in particular that you can remember?

FS: It was great. If I can still remember when I got there there was this thing called ... What was that thing? It had to do with *mzabalazo* (resistance struggle) ... [baby crying] Yes, it was SRC (Student Representative Council). This SRC started at Siphwe. We were so busy with it and we were holding lots of meetings, and we were attending them. And it was helping a lot, because when students needed something at school they would inform the SRC and the latter would approach the principal. The SRC would then inform the principal that the students demand this and that.

TM: Who are some of the students who were in the SRC at Siphwe that you can still remember?

FS: There were many. But most died because of *Mzabalazo*. But I remember one of them who is still alive, it's Vusi. He is still staying at Emfihlweni. What's his surname? Vusi Ngwane.

TM: Were you also involved in the SRC?

FS: Yes, we were together. We were attending the meetings together and approach the principal together. Then we'd report back to the students about our meeting with the principal. For example, we'd discuss about the textbooks, school fees, and that the

school should be kept clean. We discuss these issues with the principal and then we'd go back to inform the students about the principal's response.

TM: Where did you hold your SRC's meeting?

FS: We were holding them at school in the classrooms. You see, in each classroom two students were nominated to represent each classroom. Then we'd hold our meetings in the school's hall. After our meeting the two representatives would go and report back to their class. And when the students wanted something they'd request the SRC to represent them. We did that because we didn't want all the students to approach the principal. The class would inform its representatives about its grievances and the representatives would tell the members of the SRC in our meetings.

TM: And besides the textbooks what were some of your grievances?

FS: One of the things that troubled the students about the principal ... You must remember that not all the parents were able to provide for their children. So the principal would demand that all the students should wear a blazer. Some of the students were unable to purchase blazers, so they ended up bunking school. We as the SRC would go to the principal and inform that some of the students were unable to have what you're demanding. We would then suggest to him that at least he should meet the students half-way so that we could all feel equal at school. Some of the students came to school barefooted and they were walking long distances to school. Many students came to our school, because most schools then ended in Standard Four and our school started from Standard Five up to Standard 10. Some of the students would arrive late because they had to walk a long distance and they would be beaten. We would represent them and request the principal that they shouldn't be punished. We were fighting against such things.

TM: What time would you normally report back to the students?

FS: Our meetings took place after school. After school students would leave and go back to their homes and we'd remain at school to hold our meeting. And the following

day before the teacher resumes his/her lesson we'd report back to the students whatever we had discussed in our meeting.

TM: What would say made you get involved in the SRC? What made you to have an interest in such things?

FS: You know, I grew up suffering and that made to be able to feel for others, especially when they were in pain. Whenever I witness someone being roughed up I always felt their pain. Then I would intervene on their behalf. I was always aware that we are not the same as people and we come from different backgrounds. There were many students who ill-treated some of the students. So I would intervene on behalf of the victims. The same happened in the location. I sometimes think I was bad-luck because I would then be elected to represent the community. I mean in the location I was elected to be part of the street committee. When there was a funeral, for example ...

MM: Were you a member of a street committee?

FS: Yes, but I was part of the youth street committee. You know, when there was a funeral you'd find that some families they didn't have anything to bury their loved one with. So we'd go house to house requesting donations. We asked people to donate whatever they could afford. It may be R2. After collecting donations we add all the monies we've collected and take it to the family where there's a funeral. We tried to assist people.

TM: At you home did your parents discuss politics?

FS: I'd be lying if I said they did. They abhorred them. My father was worse. I think he was scared, because the police used to shoot anyone involved in politics and arrested them as well. He didn't want them.

TM: What would he say?

FS: He refused to discuss politics (laughs). He said *Ba bulaya batho ba* (the police would kill you). He got very scared after learning that there were boys from Soweto who had been killed and buried in Tembisa. He'd say *Ha baka hobulaya bat la fihla sitopo sa*

hao and ba siboloke hole (after they've killed you they'd take your corpse and bury it where nobody would find you). He didn't want politics.

MM: And you were interested in them.

FS: Yes, I was. If there was a night vigil I would go there together with the other comrades. I'd just tell myself that I'd see everything in the morning when I return.

MM: Weren't you afraid that you might be killed?

FS: That thought never even crossed my mind. But after the killing of young people at Mathole I decided to quit politics. I said no more.

TM: Oh, at the cinema.

FS: Yes, at the cinema. I can still remember there were many of us there. I thought to myself if only I had listened to my father I wouldn't be here. There was no way out. The police had surrounded the place and were standing outside in their hippos, shooting teargas and sneezing gas. They were throwing some through the windows. I can still remember we were in the second floor. Some of the comrades were jumping out through the windows and would fall on the ground. We were in there from 2 in the morning until 7 in the morning. It was very dark and there was smoke of teargas all over. Those who jumped out of the windows broke their legs and hands. Some died inside because of stampede. In the morning at 7 all those who were wearing a brown army trouser were arrested. They wanted to find out where they got those trousers. They even accused those who were wearing those trousers of having killed soldiers and robbed them off their uniform. If the police found you wearing such a trousers you could be sentenced to three years in prison. So what we'd do was to wear tracksuits underneath and wear those trousers on top. And when the police approached we'd take the army trousers off and remain with tracksuits. So the police opened for us in the morning and ordered us to kneel and pray. You know, the residents of Lifateng were watching us on top of their houses. Some were standing on top of ... What's that train station called?

MM: Leralla

FS: Leralla. Some of those people were waving a peace sign with their hands. They were asking those police to forgive us. So, we knelt down but then the police threw teargas at us. When we tried to stand up they hit us with sjamboks. We'd kneel down again. It was sad. Finally, they left us and we went home. Where I was staying was a distant away from Lifateng, but I walked home. I stayed for three weeks unable to speak because of the teargas. If you went to the hospital they would arrest you. The police were guarding Tembisa Hospital. They were on the look-out for anyone who came to the hospital suffering from the sneezing gas. They arrested them because they argued that they were at Mathole cinema. They took them to detention. We survived by drinking milk, because we were afraid to go to the hospital. My dad said *Uyabone sisi. Kgale ke hobotsa nthotsahao. Sheba nou o batlile o shwa* (You see now my daughter. I've been warning you about your involvement in these things. Look now you nearly died). After that incident preparations were made to bury all those people who died at Mathole. I think about 13 people died there. Mind you, we had gone there to attend a night vigil for the seven people who had been killed by the police. Now this.

TM: How did you survive?

FS: I don't know. I hid myself inside the cinema. But many people were able to survive. I left and went home. We later learned that there were people who sold us out. We started manufacturing petrol bombs and...

MM: How did you manufacture petrol bombs?

FS: We used the small Mellow-Wood bottle. We'd pour petrol inside that bottle and sand. Then we'd thrown in unlit sticks of matches inside the bottle. Then we'd open a hole on the cap of the bottle and place a cloth on the cap. We'd shake that bottle and when we thrown it wherever it lands it exploded. We attacked a house belonging to a certain woman living in my street. We threw petrol bombs in a house. The police came looking for us. They went house to house. I stopped sleeping at home.

MM: What happened to the house you attacked?

FS: It burned.

MM: Where was the woman?

FS: Inside the house.

MM: Did she also burn?

FS: She managed to escape and run away. Her children were also able to escape. I can't remember where they ran to, but their house burned down. The police were looking for us. We slept in the veld. Then I decided that I couldn't live like this forever. I went to stay with my aunt in Pretoria. Immediately I arrived at home my father said I can't sleep at home because the police were there and they had searched the house, turning mattresses up side down. They found pamphlets and struggle t-shirts and trousers. My father was worried that the police might come back and found me at home. So he decided that I should leave. I went to my aunt in Pretoria. When I arrived there news were making rounds that there were people from Tembisa who had ran away to Pretoria.

TM: Where in Pretoria?

FS: In Winterveld. The police there were saying the people from Tembisa had come to Winterveld to poison young people who lived there. It became a mess. There came [Lucas] Mangope's police carrying *donkiepirries*. They went house to house. When they found a child in the house they wanted to know why the child was at home during the day. Why wasn't the child at school? They concluded that all those children found at home during the day were kids from Tembisa. My aunt was working at the *kitchens* (i.e. domestic work) somewhere in Pretoria. What's that place called? But it's in Pretoria. She heard that the police were searching houses in Winterveld, and arresting young people. She knew that I could be in trouble. She came to fetch me and took me to her workplace. I stayed with her where she was working. I had run away from Tembisa. Now I was running away from Winterveld and living in the *kitchens*. My concern was that her employers would hear about what was happening in the location and would want to know why she (my aunt) had a child in their house. I stayed there but my aunt hid me from them. I slept in the garage with dogs (laughs).

MM: Oh, so that her employers shouldn't see you.

FS: Yes. But during the day I stay with my aunt. She used to sleep there. When they returned from work she would hide me. They would check in her room to see who she was with. I stay in the garage and at night when they were asleep I would go to my aunt's room to sleep. In the morning ... You know, I was doing up and down.

TM: How long did you stay there?

FS: Two weeks. My father would phone my aunt from his workplace to tell her that I shouldn't come back to Tembisa yet. My aunt would ask him how the situation was. She told him that the Mangope police harassed me and I was now staying with her in the *kitchens* but it was not nice. I swore that I'd never return to Tembisa. I stayed there until the situation had calmed down then I returned to Tembisa. After two days some of my male comrades came to me and said 'Hey, there's no life for us here in South Africa anymore. Let's leave the country and go to Lusaka'.

MM: Where's Lusaka?

FS: It's where *mzabalazo* was also taking place. Some of our comrades had already left for Lusaka. You know, Matjatji if I had gone to Lusaka maybe today I'd be leading a better life. There's one guy called Mthofi, he now lives in Birchleigh. He lives a good life. He drives nice cars and has a bodyguard. He's a member of the ANC.

TM: Who came to you to inform you that you should leave the country?

FS: It was Mthofi and the other guy called Khulu.

MM: Where are they now?

FS: They are now successful, and they live a better life in Birchleigh. I'm still in Tembisa. Because of this I decided not to want to know what's happening in their lives. Khulu was a bodyguard of Mr (Cyril) Ramaphosa.

TM: What did you say to them when they told you to leave?

FS: I agreed with them and packed my staff. I was scared. I had the rumours that in Lusaka they trained people to become soldiers. And that you could stay there for the rest of your life. If you were to die there there was no way that they would return your corpse to Tembisa for burial. You were a soldier. If you died your body would be eaten by lions in the veld. I thought about my parents who did not want politics. So I decided to run away.

TM: So what did you do? When they came to fetch you did you tell them that you were no longer going?

FS: No I did not tell them. They had informed me that we were leaving on such and such a day and at this time. So we packed our stuff in school bags. When they came to fetch me at home I was not at home. When I returned I was told they were at home looking for me. I knew that they had left. They only returned recently. By then I had three children ... No, two. They came back and now they're living good life. I met them one day and they said *Wena, sheba nou re kgole jwang* (You, look how far our lives are now). They are back and their lives have progressed. I was scared that's why I couldn't continue with our plan.

TM: Do you still remember when did the incident at Mathole cinema happen?

FS: I still remember because it was not long after my mother passed away. She passed away in 1985. It happened in 1986. What I don't remember is the month.

TM: When you first became involved in *mzabalazo* were you recruited by anyone, or how did you become involved?

FS: It was my friends. In actual fact for me to be deeply involved in *mzabalazo* it was after I was elected to the youth street committee. We'd hold meetings. When they announced that there was an event at such and such a section I would follow them. That's how I became involved.

TM: As a member of the youth street committee what were your duties?

FS: You see, children who didn't want to go to school, who didn't listen to their parents we'd talk to them. We'd call a meeting and discuss issues with them. We'd tell how they should behave. We were trying to steer them away from becoming involved in smoking dagga and glue. We'd guide them and tell them not to bunk school. Parents with delinquent children would come and inform us about them. We'd summon those children to our meetings and talk to them. Sometimes we'd beat them severely. We collected money and bought sjamboks. Parents would report their delinquent children to us and we'd go out and look for them. When we found them we'd bring beat them. We wanted to change from their delinquent ways and go back to school.

TM: Your street committee was based at Emfihlweni

FS: Yes.

TM: Who were the other members of youth street committee?

FS: It was the two guys I mentioned that they left the country and went into exile.

TM: Okay, Mthofi and Khulu

FS: Yes. And Vusi Ngwane. And another girl called Phindile, who stayed in the same street as mine.

MM: Where is she?

FS: She's around. She went back home after her marriage didn't work out. Yes, it was Mthofi, Khulu, Vusi, myself and Phindile, and Lindi. Lindi is also still around. I met her the other day on her way to court. But she doesn't stay at Emfilweni. She's married now. There were many.

TM: Why do you think they elected you?

FS: That really surprise me. I remember my mother was still alive when they elected and she shouted at me *Nthotse ga dialoka. Why o rata dilo?* (These activities are not good. Why do you like involving yourself in such things?). In our meetings I enjoyed listening to people talking. I think that's what also attracted me to these things. My

mother thought I liked to be chased by the police. Then police used to shoot and our parents were scared. I didn't give up. I really loved what I was doing. I used to follow them all over wherever they went.

MM: Where did you hold your meetings?

FS: We used to rotate. We didn't hold them at the same place. Sometimes they would come to my parents' place. But because my parents didn't want politics I was able to persuade my comrades not to hold them at my parents' place. Mostly we would hold them at Khulu's place, or at Lindi's, or at Vusi's. At Vusi's place there was a garage. We would meet in that garage. His mother was also involved in the struggle with other women. I think she was also a leading woman comrade.

MM: Where is his mother?

FS: She's still around. She didn't mind us meeting in her home. Actually she supported everything that the comrades were doing. We'd even consult her if we wanted to do something and she'd advise us how to go about doing it. There was another woman, Smangele's mother ... Mamatjati, do you still remember Smangele, my friend?

MM: Yes.

FS: The one who looked like a coloured.

MM: Yes

FS: She passed away, did you know?

MM: Wow!

FS: Yes. Well, her mother was also involved. We'd also go to her for advice.

MM: Didn't people sell you out that you were holding meetings?

FS: No, no one sold us out. Each section had to have a street committee, both for adults and the youth.

TM Were you trained to resolve youth problems, like you mentioned earlier that you had to deal with delinquent youth?

FS: No, we were not trained. But in our meeting one could pick up a lot of information. You see, in our meetings before you speak you'd have to raise your hand to be allowed to talk. Then people would come up with different suggestions about how to resolve a problem. That's where we identified people for different roles. But we were not offered any training. We managed to change the behavior of many children. But one thing that caused the whole thing to collapse it was when they called for stayaways. A call would be made that *Azikhwelwa. Akuyiwa emsebenzini* (We do not ride the buses. We are not going to work). Certain vehicles were identified as targets. For example, bakery vans, vehicles belonging to firms. They would stop them and order the driver to step out of the vehicle. They would loot maybe bread and everything in that company vehicle. Then they'd burn the vehicle.

MM: Was it because they wanted everyone not to go to work?

FS: It's just like now when they want an increase at work and the white employers are not interested. The workers would decide that they would not go to work. They'll strike. But here they enforced a stayaway. At some point a call was made that people in the location shouldn't buy at shops in town. Those who stubbornly went to town to buy they would wait for them at Tembisa station. People would come carrying plastics ... That period was called Black Christmas. People were forbidden from buying in town.

MM: They called Black Christmas

FS: Yes. People were not allowed to buy clothes, groceries. The argument was that whites enjoy our money but they didn't care about black people. So they called for a Black Christmas. Those who went to town to buy we would wait for them at the train stations. They would search their plastics, carrying fish oil and stay soft. They would make them drink them, because they were warned not to buy in town but they went and bought in town. Some people were made to drink stay soft, jik. They wanted to discourage people from supporting white people. They forced people to drink jik, fish oil. There were those whose ears were cut. That's when people started misbehaving. There

were some people who pretended to be comrades but in reality they were there to misbehave. They would waylay people at the train stations and rob them off their monies. They behaved as if they were comrades.

TM: As the youth leaders how did you deal with this issue?

FS: That's what caused divisions. Some people decided to take their way and others did the same. There was now an element of tsotsis (hooligans). I mean, unemployed boys in the location relished targeting company vehicles. They would target company vehicles carrying clothes and many other goods. They would loot everything and sold them. That's how many people lost their job. We started investigating people who were involved in such acts and we would 'visit' them at their homes to find out why they were involved in such acts. Some of them would be beaten severely with sjamboks. They would point out other people who were also involved in these acts. Gradually, the situation normalized again.

TM: You talked about the army trousers, where did you get them?

FS: They were selling them at Marabastad. And at Ookmoor. They were sold for R20 or 30. You'd find us looking really nice wearing those trousers. We wore them when had to go somewhere. We would wear our brown army trousers and white t-shirts. We would attend a night vigil and after that we'd return to our homes. But the police didn't want us to wear those trousers. If they found you wearing them they would to know where you got them.

TM: As you a woman attending night vigils which were held at night, where did you say at home?

FS: You know, interestingly even though they were held at night we were not afraid to attend them. There would be many of us there. You'd find that at Khalambazo three of our comrades had died and there would be a night vigil, and on Saturday again there would another night vigil somewhere. We'd only rest on Sunday. We'd attend a night vigil on Friday and Saturday morning we'd bury our comrade. In the evening we'd attend another night vigil and Sunday morning we'd bury our comrade. Then we didn't

even use cars to transport us. We'd walk from Mthambeka until Emfihlweni. There would be many of us in the tarred road. We were not using cars. Only adults used cars. Then we would carry a coffin on our shoulders and walked to the cemetery. When others were tired they would give it to others to carry. It would never fall on the ground. And when we reached the cemetery the police would be there to disturb us. When we entered the cemetery at Emfihlweni they would be waiting outside in their hippos. Then they would fire sneezing gas.

MM: While carrying a coffin?

FS: Matjatji, those people made our lives miserable. They would fire sneezing gas so that it would be difficult to bury our comrade. Sometimes they would even injure people who were not involvement; you know, people who were passing by. Because there were many of us they didn't choose who they shot. They just shot. People had by then realized that after they had shot teargas they had to go to the tap and open water and wipe their faces with it. But with sneezing gas you wouldn't use water. If you used water you'd develop rash on your face and the face would start itching. Your eyes would turn red. The police didn't want to see people in a group. If they drove past a corner and saw a group of people standing they would throw sneezing gas. They thought that you were planning something. They forbade meetings. At the time they had invaded the township. They were patrolling our township. When they came across a group they would stop and want to determine what you were doing. Some of their *impipis* (see-outs) informed them that people were holding meetings in garages. So the police started invading garages and when they found you holding a meeting they would fire a sneezing gas in the garage in order to disperse the group. They caused a lot of trouble.

TM: What did you do when you were at a night vigil for the whole night?

FS: We'd sing. I don't want to lie to you if there was a church minister to administer the vigil we wouldn't even give him a chance to preach. We'd sing and *toy-toyi*. We'd sing struggle song only. We'd do this until morning. People would shout *Amandla* (Power) and others would respond *Nga wethu* (It's ours). There'd be slogans. We didn't look at the bible. We'd sing for the whole night and by then the coffin would be laid in the tent.

TM: Can you still remember some of the songs?

FS: Tjo, there were many. I know them all.

TM: Can you sing one of them for us?

FS: Hey, there were many. I even had some of cassettes. The one that I used to like the most went like this (singing):

Aye viva ANC. Mayibuye iAfrika. Kudala sisebenzela amabhunu mahala,

Sisebenza kwamasipala. Mayibuye iAfrika. Aye viva ANC

TM: And how did you feel when you were singing this song?

FS: It felt really nice. We'd sing these songs in the night vigil of someone who was killed by the boers and not at the vigil of someone who died because he/she was ill. We sang them for someone who died in *mzabalazo*. That's why we didn't want people who'd preach for us.

TM: You said Friday it would be a night vigil and Saturday you buried your comrade ...

FS: And Saturday evening we attended another night vigil. And Sunday we buried.

TM: Did you have the time to wash yourselves and have a good meal?

FS: We'd go to our homes. For example, let's today it's Friday we'd spent the whole day at home and in the evening around 9 or 10 o'clock we'd go to the night vigil. We'd leave Emfihlweni to, say, Mthambeka. And there would be many of us. We'd walk. We'd spent the whole night at the vigil and when at 6 in the morning ... No, I'm not telling the truth. Say the funeral was scheduled for 10 in the morning. We'd stay there until after the funeral. After the funeral we didn't go back to bereaved family's place. We'd go to our homes to bath and eat.

MM: Didn't the bereaved family prepare food?

FS: They did. But we didn't eat because we had to go back to our homes. The family would prepare food for the neighbours and their families. After the funeral we didn't go

back to the bereaved family's place. We went to our homes, cleaned, bathed and slept. In the evening again we'd collect each other and attended another night vigil for the whole night. On Sunday we'd leave the house in the morning singing to go to the cemetery. After the burial we'd disperse. Everyone would go to his or her home. We didn't go back to the bereaved family's place to wash our hands and eat.

TM: So Sunday you could relax ...

FS: After the funeral we went back to our homes and we'd rest. Do you know what made us to bury every week? It was the boers. For example, let's say we buried our comrade on Saturday but the funeral was disturbed. After funeral they would shoot us with teargas, chase us. Some of the people would be injured. And yet others would die. So the following week we'd have to bury another comrade. Do you see? And that was painful. Every time we buried a comrade it was inevitable that some of our comrades would be killed. That's why I'm saying most parents didn't approve of their children's involvement in the struggle. There was no guarantee that your child would come back alive from the funeral.

MM: So every time you went to the cemetery to bury you were bound to find hippos there.

FS: All the time. And the police would try to disperse us. You'd hear them saying 'You should disperse after five minutes'. There was no way that all of us, many as we were, we could disperse in five minutes. Then the police would start shooting and the people would run in all directions. Some jumping fences. Others would be falling on top of each other. Every week, I mean, hospital were always full of injured people. The police would go to the hospital in their hippos and arrest the injured comrades. We'd demand that they should be released but the police would refuse. I was once detained at Rabasotho Police Station.

MM: For what?

FS: Because of my involvement in the struggle. They would chase us and we'd run away. If you were to get hurt while running away then you go to the hospital, the police would fetch at the hospital.

MM: Injured as you were?

FS: Yes.

MM: Where were you injured?

FS: You know, I have many scars Matjatji. Just have a look. I was injured by the fences which we used to jump over. We would jump them over and then stand up and start running. So those who were arrested at the hospital were taken to Rabasotho Police Station. We went to Rabasotho – there were many of us. We stood at the gate and started to sing. We were many. I think we were more than thousand. We were demanding that they should release our comrades, because they hadn't done anything wrong. The police came and detained us all. Because we were many, no one could sleep. So we sang for the whole night. In the morning they chased us away because we were making noise. We went to our homes still singing. I remember we were singing the song called *Sekukude emakhaya*. It went like this: *Sekukude mama, emakhaya kukude* (Mother, our homes are far away). We sang that song for the whole night. They had to let us go in the morning.

MM: But still you continued, attending meetings.

FS: Yes. I think we enjoyed the singing.

TM: In your meetings were you ever supplied with reading materials to read?

FS: Yes, they used to supply us with those, especially books and pamphlets. I liked to write at the time, so I would copy some of the information in my full-length books and I'd hide it under the mattress. When the police came to search my parents' place they confiscated all my materials. They took everything they found in the house which they thought was linked with the ANC. The police used to frequent my parents' house and that worried my father. They would turn everything up side down looking for me and any

piece of evidence linking me to the ANC. Fortunately, we used to hide our petrol bombs inside the coal drum. You must remember that in those days we used to make fire on the stove. So we had drums where we stored coal. We'd put our petrol bombs inside those drums. But the police later came to know that we were hiding petrol bombs inside the coal drums. Their *impimpis* supplied them with correct information. My father threatened to kick me out of his because, he admitted that he was unable to live with a girl-child who was behaving like me. He said at least if I was a boy. He said he couldn't stand it anymore to be woken up by the police in the early hours of the morning (laughs).

TM: At home were you the only involved in *mzabalazo*?

FS: You see, at home we were three – children. I'm the first born. Then the second is a born, then the last born is Maago Mduzuzi (Mduzuzi's mother). I was the only one involved in this thing. Mduzuzi's mother even today she's afraid of the police. The police would wake them up at night looking for me. And in the morning they would complain *No, sisi. Wena ngalendaba yakho. Amaphoyisa asijampa ebusuku silele. Kanti why ongayeki lezinto zakho?* (No, sister. You're causing us trouble with your activities. The police are jumping us at night while sleeping. Why can't you stop what you're doing?).

MM: You didn't have kids then

FS: No. I had my first child when I was then living in Maokeng. When I went to stay in Maokeng I met my father's child, your uncle (looking at MM) there. He was also involved in the struggle. I joined him there and we'd go to the meetings together. I remember we attended a certain night vigil and three comrades were killed there. They lived in different streets so it was decided that their funerals should be combined and be held at the same place. Because we lacked space in the township, they were taken to the Jan Lubbe Stadium there at ...

MM: Makhulong?

FS: Makhulong. It was then called Jan Lubbe Stadium. Makhulong it's a new name. I used to go with your uncle to Jan Lubbe Stadium and from there we'd go to the cemetery to bury our comrades. He used to be very involved.

TM: How did you meet?

FS: (Laughs). I met him at *mzabalazong*. I found him to be very involved and committed to the struggle so I was attracted to him. We continued seeing each and then later we had our baby. But at the time I had already moved out of my parents' place, because they used to shout at me. So I stopped going there. So when we met we continued the struggle together. It was fun then unlike now. Then comrades didn't shoot each other.

TM: Who taught you make petrol bombs?

FS: We were taught by Mthofi. He was in and out of exile. I remember whenever he came back from exile he would bring with him handgrenades. When he realized that petrol bombs weren't making an impact, he would use handgrenades.

MM: What is a handgrenade?

FS: It's something that looks like a berry. But it was big. It was green and had a small string at the back. If you wanted it to explode you had to pull that string at the back and threw it. Where it landed it would explode. We did the same when we were using petrol bombs. We used bottles. I remember we used to collect money to buy 5 litres of petrol. We used to throw them at the hippos as well. A hippo looked like a suitcase. You'd see the police standing up. But when it was raining or cold they all sat inside and you'd only see the driver. Whenever they passed we would throw them with petrol bombs. When it hit the hippo they would all jump back inside.

MM: After you hit it you'd run away.

FS: Yes. We would waylay them at the corner of the street. You could attack it facing it straight. There were many of them in the township. In a short space of time countless hippos would pass each street. I remember we used to called them Ntambai. Some people called them Rathontsha. They would patrol the whole township. We would

waylay them and hit them with petrol bombs and the hippo would drive fast. Although the petrol bomb would cause fire but because a hippo is made up of strong steel it wouldn't burn. It would just make a dark mark. Next time we'd see them spraying them at Rabasotho. But some of the police got burnt. Remember that they were fighting against us. They were many here in Tembisa. I don't know where they were from.

TM: So after deciding that you no longer wanted to be involved in *mzabalazo* what did you do?

FS: You know, my comrades continued coming to my parents' place looking for me. I'd dodge them, made sure I wasn't at home all the time. Whenever they came they wouldn't find me. I'd come across some and I'd say I heard that you came around and they would it looks like you're no longer interested. What made me finally decide not to participate anymore it was when we had decided to leave the country. After hearing what happened to those who went into exile I said no I'm not leaving. I dodged them. After they had left comrades stopped looking for me. Many people in Tembisa left the country into exile, including female comrades. I know one of them didn't return. Her was Magauta. She was sister to Lindi I spoke about earlier. They were sisters and liked *mzabalazo*.

MM: What happened to her?

FS: She died in exile.

MM: So her corpse was never returned home.

FS: No.

TM: Would it be possible for us to track Lindi?

FS: I think I can find her for you. She's married now. If I want her I'll have to go to her home at Emfihlweni.

TM: Who is the one who you said is still unmarried ... No, the one who returned home?

MM: The one you said was married but was now back.

FS: That's Phindile. She's always around. I'm not sure if she's now employed. She was my neighbor. I met her not long at Rabasotho when we went to Mduduzi's case. Whenever we meet she reminds of what we used to do and say had we continued we could be far in life by now. I say to her let bygones be bygones.

TM: You mentioned the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party). What do you remember about its role in Tembisa?

FS: It used to cause lot of trouble for people here. I remember we used to wear t-shirts written ANC ... In fact, IFP had large support in Spruit, in Katlehong. It harassed people. It came to Tembisa and wanted to kill young boys.

TM: When it came to Tembisa where was did it base?

FS: Usually they would come and go. They didn't sleep over. They converged at Ookmoor. Do you know Ookmoor Station? Behind it next to the Daveyton taxis. In most cases instances, they didn't come inside the location. When they arrived their transport would leave them behind the station and they would go to Sethokga Hostel. Most of their activities took place at the hostel. You see, their fights began in Natal. So when they meet here they continued fighting. Their fights don't stop.

MM: So when they arrived at the hostel did they find people there?

FS: Then they started fighting the residents of the hostel, particularly those who hailed from Natal. Every time when we heard that there was fighting at the hostel we knew that it was Inkatha.

MM: So it was difficult to live in the hostel

FS: Of course. That's why they've been converted (into family units). There's another hostel called Nhlanzeni next to Zniko ... Is it Nhlanzeni? No, it's Vus'muzi hostel. That whole area was controlled by Inkatha. In almost all the areas where there were hostels Inkatha was strong. Those people were cruel. They used to shoot to kill. Everyday when we woke up we'd hear that a person had been killed next to the hostel. They didn't live inside the township.

TM: Did you hold night vigils for the people killed by Inkatha?

FS: Usually they didn't kill our comrades.

TM: So how did this fighting end?

FS: It ended after people began burning down the hostels. Hostels were eradicated.

TM: How were they eradicated?

FS: You see, some of those people lived in the hostels without permits. You'd find that in a single room allocated for four people more than 20 people would be living in that room. All of them didn't have permits allowing to stay in the hostel. So they started raiding each room demanding to see permits. Each permit had information about the name of the resident and his room number. Those who didn't have permits were forced to leave. Slowly their numbers decreased. It was difficult to tell who killed people, because everyone could go in the hostel and live there. I mean, even people who caused trouble in the township used to run and hide in the hostel.

TM: Who forced them out of the hostels?

FS: Members of the ANC. The adult members of the ANC went inside the hostels and spoke to the residents of the hostels, informing them many people had died because of what was happening in the hostels. They suggested that order should be restored. If a room was allocated to two people it should only two people living in that room. And if they were three it should be like that. Because they said they were not sure who was murdering people in the township. Many people were killed next to the Vus'muzi hostel. It's because it was closer to the football ground and train rails. It's the ground on the one hand and on the other are the railway rails. Everyday next to the rails about three or four people were found killed. They had been shot by members of Inkatha.

TM: So when did you start staying in this area?

FS: Which one?

TM: Winnie Mandela?

FS: We arrived here in 1992.

TM: How was this area when you arrived here?

FS: It was just an open veld. You'd built your shack here and another person built his/hers over there. There was enough space. It was like in the rural areas. People lived far apart. But as time went by people slowly began trickling in. After a while this area turned into a congested area.

TM: Where were those people from?

FS: Most of the people here came from the township.

MM: Where did you get the permission to reside here?

FS: No one gave us permission. When we got here we built our shack. We were then informed that we have to vacate this area because it was the property of a certain Afrikaner. We were told we had no right to stay in this area. Then came a certain gentleman who had registered us and gave us a card. We paid him R60. He was later murdered. After hearing the news we went to him and told him the news and wanted to know from him what we needed to do because we had bought this space from him. He promised us that he'd solve this issue. He discussed this issue with the owner of this area. I think he also gave him some money. Then it was agreed that we continue staying here. Many people began to come to this area until it became congested as it is now. Then people formed street committees.

MM: You mentioned something about people killing young boys. Where was that happening?

FS: Next to the house at Ookmoor. The first houses next to Ookmoor. That's when we became scared and took our sons to Rabasotho. You must remember that Ookmoor is not far from Maokeng.

MM: What did they do when they arrived at your house?

FS: They would knock in rough way ... [disturbed]

MM: So when they get inside the house what did they do you're the boy-child?

FS: They'd knock and when you say come in ... [baby cries] Do you still remember that in those days we didn't have electricity so we used coal stove? We boiled water on the stove. If they found a small baby like mine they would remove his/her clothes and check whether he was a boy or not. By then we'd have put a boiler on the stove to boil water. If the child was a boy they would dip his head inside that boiler. Thereafter they'd leave your house and go to the next house. They used to go house to house. People were always crying. I hated Inkatha because they were black people just like us. I asked myself why were they doing this to us? Your grandmother was scared that they would also invade Maokeng.

MM: Where did my grandmother take her children because she also had boys?

FS: No, her children were adults then. It was your father, Mpumi's father and ...

MM: Was back at home in the rural areas.

MM: The only boy-child at home then was Boy-boy. Boy-boy and the other boys were taken to Rabasotho.

TM: Police station?

FS: Yes, police station. They slept there. They were many. That police station is not that big, so some of them were even forced to sleep outside. But it was safe. I can still remember they were given sponges to sleep on. I don't know whether they were supplied by government or not. They also gave them blankets. His grandmother would wake up everyday and visit him to give him food. I couldn't sleep thinking about my only boy-child. It was sad.

MM: I heard that when you arrived at Winnie Mandela there were many people who were killed by people who doused petrol on the tyre they had placed on them. What was happening?

FS: It was because of that old law that if you killed someone you were also had to be killed. Like that other person who had killed someone he was also killed. The community went to look for him at his house but couldn't find him. But it finally found him. A tyre was placed around his neck and he was fastened on the tree and he was burned to death. It was sad. And this was done daylight.

TM: Who introduced this law?

FS: I wouldn't want to lie to you I really do not know. And it spread. But after the killing of that man I haven't heard that another person was brutally killed. People became afraid to kill because they knew that they'd also be murdered.

MM: The people who killed that man were they arrested?

FS: Yes, many of them were arrested. One of them has just returned from prison. He can't even walk, nstate [Mr] Solly. Others haven't been released. They were not given the same sentence. Some received eight years, others four years.

MM: So the sentencing was determined by your role.

FS: Yes. Those who received four years were released first.

MM: It's possible that they were sold out

FS: Of course. They were sold out by MaPhumzile, the one who was burned. There were rumours that she was a member of Inkatha. She reported them to the police. I remember that she lived under police guard. Later the police moved her to a flat in Johannesburg. When she went to court, the police would escort her. After court they would escort her back to where she was staying. She was even provided with state fund.

MM: Then after the case what happened to her?

FS: Well, they were sentenced and she returned ... No, it seems they wanted to buy her a house where she'd be safe. But because she liked money she told them to give her the money. She went to stay in Phalaborwa with her husband. The residents of Winnie Mandela even forgot about her. But then she returned and stayed with her mother at Winnie.

MM: Wasn't her mother employed at the hospital?

FS: Yes, she was. She worked at the mortuary. She came back after her mother passed away [baby cries]

MM: Was that man the only person who was burned alive with a tyre?

FS: I think there were two. But the other one I think was killed in Zone 8. Here in Zone 4 only one person was burned to death.

TM: After they had formed street committees here at Winnie Mandela did you become involved as well?

FS: No, I wasn't involved. In any case, my husband refused. I didn't even attend their meetings because that's where they elected people to be part of such committees. Not long there was a meeting concerning electricity. Initially there was a committee which was tasked with the responsibility of taking the memorandum to the authorities. But every time the authorities would dismiss them, saying they must come back the following week. The electricity problem persisted. So the community wanted to elect another committee. They invited the community to the meeting and I was elected to be in the committee. But when I returned and informed my husband he flatly refused that I should participate in that committee.

TM: Are you a vocal person in the meetings?

FS: I usually talk during the meetings. I'd ask questions. I'd also make suggestions.

TM: Why did you move from Emfihlweni to Winnie Mandela?

FS: I left Emfihlweni after getting married, and we moved to Maokeng and stayed at Matjatji's parents' place. We stayed there but when some of the members of the family had to come to Tembisa like Matjatji and our children were growing up we decided to look for our own place to stay. That's when we came to stay here at Winnie Mandela.

TM: You said when you arrived here the area was empty.

FS: Yes.

TM: So how did the name Winnie Mandela come about?

FS: I really don't know. But my husband can remember. No, a meeting was called. Before then when you asked someone where do you live, they'd say 'I live down there in that shack settlement'. This place didn't have a name. A meeting was called and many people attended it. It was suggested in that meeting that we needed to come up with a name for this place. Then it was given the name Winnie Mandela.

MM: Was this after 1994?

FS: It was in 1992. No, no, it was 1994. Boy-boy was born in 1992. We arrived here in 1994 and Boy-boy was two years old.

MM: I interviewed uncle David and I asked him about this name and he told me that this name came after 1994. This was after the national elections.

FS: Yes, it was in 1994. In that meeting it was agreed that once the area was complete we should come up with street names.

TM: In that meeting were there other names besides Winnie Mandela which were suggested?

FS: Yes, many names were suggested.

TM: Can you still remember some of the names which were suggested?

FS: What were some of the names by the way? There were many. I think three or four came on top but Winnie Mandela was preferred by the majority.

MM: And you stayed here for a long time without electricity, isn't it?

FS: Yes. We only started receiving electricity last in June. Our kids are the lucky ones. When we got here there was no electricity. We used candles. We even struggled to get water. We had to pay 50 cents per bucket to get water.

TM: In other people's yards?

FS: Yes. They argued that they were also paying for water so they couldn't them to us for free. We were really struggling. We didn't even have a trolley to push the bucket full of water. So you had to carry it on your head. We used that water for cooking, bathing, and laundry. We'd borrow trolleys from those who had and they'd be confiscated from us.

TM: Who confiscated them?

FS: There were people patrolling around in trucks. If they met you pushing a trolley they would take it. They said those were their trolleys. The trolleys belonged to Pick 'n Pay, Hyper, and so on. They didn't even want to listen to your explanation. Some of us

bought those trolleys. There were people who sold them for R20. You'd use it for two days in the third day when they meet you in the street they take down your buckets and confiscate the trolley. After a few days you'd buy another trolley (laughs). They'd confiscate it as well. I decided that I'm not going to buy a trolley again. We decided to purchase a wheelbarrow.

TM: I think we can end here. We've covered many issues.

FS: Like I said some of the things I've forgotten.

TM: If there's anything that you've forgotten we'll deal with that when we return for a follow-up interview. Thank you.

MM: If you have old pictures, please let us know and I'll come back and fetch them.

FS: We'll look for them. We have many pictures.

MM: Maybe some you'll find at Emfihlweni.

End of Interview

