



Interview with Sibongile Mtshali

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TM: Today is the 11th of June 2013. I'm Tshepo Moloi at Old Stand, at the Mkhondo Municipality, in Driefontein. I'm with Ms Mtshali. She'll introduce herself shortly. We're here to do a research study for the South African History Archive's (SAHA) Land Act of 1913 Legacy project. Mama, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing us to meet with you to interview you for this project, looking at the impact of the Act, the forced removals and people's resistance against them as you remember them. And we're also interested in finding out how is the land used today in Driefontein. I'll ask you to talk about what you can remember. To start off, maybe, Mama you can introduce yourself and tell where you were born.

SM: Okay, my name is Sibongile Mtshali. I'm not Mrs Mtshali but Ms Mtshali. I can say I was born in Driefontein, because there's no other place that I know except Driefontein. I arrived in Driefontein when I was about four years. According to our parents they were from a place called Mollman, just outside Piet Retief. That's where I was born. But I don't know that place at all. By the time I started making sense of things I was already here in Driefontein. Then we were staying next to the road. There was my mother ... I was in the 1950s. We grew up in Driefontein when it was still very, very dry. You couldn't find a single vegetable, like a cabbage

TM: Wow!

SM: But then the area was vast. I think they used to call the yards ten morgens. I don't know how they measured a morgen in terms of hectares. Yes, people had huge yards, but because of poverty and the dryness of the place the majority preferred to leave Driefontein and go to eGoli (Johannesburg). They'll desert the area.

TM: And this would be the whole family or individuals within a family?

SM: Mainly men. And then they'd be followed by young men.

TM: Women would be left behind.

SM: Yes, women remained. Many of the landowners, or should I say standowners, abandoned this place and preferred to live in eGoli. This happened until news started making rounds that the whites owning the neighbouring farms were chasing their black workers away from their farms. Those people then came to live in Driefontein as tenants.

TM: When was this, can you still remember?

SM: This was in the 1970s. People started flocking into Driefontein. You see, then on the farms there was what was called labour tenants, where you'd find that the husband, his children, and even his wife would work on the farm. But then some of the children observed this and thought if we continue doing this we'd end having nothing. Then they started running away from the farms. The parents would be left alone and the whites would say to them 'You don't have the means to continue working here, so you have to leave my farm'. The parents would be old by then. The children would return from eGoli and found that their parents have been kicked out of the farms, then they'd look for a place to stay in Driefontein for their parents. They'd negotiate with the standowners, saying 'Could you please give us a piece of land where we could settle our parents? We're going back to work in eGoli. Their boss has kicked them out of his farm because we're no longer there to work'. That's how things were here. When these things were happening it was that time of that Act called Influx Control. It stipulated that if you were not born in eGoli you didn't qualify to be a resident there. People going to work in eGoli they'd via the magistrate court in Wakkerstroom to have their ID's (Identity Documents. Before 1986 these were called Reference

Books or Passbook) stamped, giving them permission to go to eGoli to work and not as a resident. They'd go to eGoli and there they stayed in hostels. They'd work there and at the end of the year their firms would discharge them.

TM: They'd have to come back home.

SM: Yes. Every year when it was nearing Christmas they'd be discharged. So that meant they'd never qualify to be residents of eGoli. The years they spent in eGoli were never counted, because every year they were discharged and the following year in January they went back to eGoli. They had to re-register. That disqualified them from being the residents of eGoli. That's Influx (control). But some of the people from Driefontein somehow were able to get houses over there. For example, my family has a house in Jabulani, Soweto. The municipality's houses, you know, the four-roomed houses. To qualify for that house you had to real sweat. After getting a house in eGoli they put your name in a permit – house permit. That meant you qualified to be the resident of eGoli, and when you were employed it would be on a permanent basis; you'd never be discharged again. Some of the people were no so lucky to get house in eGoli, but they kept on fighting for this right. Others even aged doing that. And among those were the people who had deserted their places here in Driefontein. And many of them were staying in hostels.

TM: They deserted this place because it was dry?

SM: Yes, it was very dry.

TM: Then how were the others surviving?

SM: We're still alive even today, as you can see.

TM: But how did you survive then?

SM: I really don't know. You know, here we didn't have milk – fresh milk. I mean, here you'd suffer even when you had money. Some people had cattle. But there was nowhere here where I could take money and go and buy fresh milk. No, no. There was a certain Jew in one of the neighbouring farms up there next to the water reservoir it had cattle that produces milk. This Jew would put fresh milk in the machine to produce cream, and water coming out of that process would remain in the machine. He sold us that water.

TM: Water?

SM: Yes. It was white looking water that didn't have cream. That water was sour. We enjoyed that. Some times you'd go there to buy and find that he had sold out. Remember this place was big.

TM: So people used to buy from him.

SM: A lot. And our area was big and he sold limited stock. I mean, I was telling you about a cabbage ... Okay, our area is huge. So you'd find that there might be one person who enjoyed working with the soil. He/she would start a vegetable garden. The other point that I need to mention is that we were told that the reason this place was sold to black people was that before it was sold its soil was tested and the results showed that it was infertile. It was barren. It was not the type of soil where you could plough and expect to harvest, not unless you had fertilizers specifically for the type of vegetables you wanted to plough. But many people here didn't know

about that. So they'd just farm and put manure, but nothing came out of that. And this discouraged many people from farming.

TM: And abandoned the idea

SM: Yes, many stopped. Those whose stands were next to the running water were able to harvest a cabbage. This applied mainly to those who lived next to the dam. There was a certain Mr Nkosi, who ended up being a chief somewhere eSabelweni (rural area), he had a license to operate a butchery. And the old man Mkhize – Beauty Mkhize's grandfather in-law- possessed the same license. Then what happened was that if you had a butchery you also had to act as an abattoir. You had to purchase a living cattle and request people to slaughter it for you. It was very much unhealthy. There was another Mr Nkosi who lived at New Stand ... Then there weren't many people. In some yards you'd find that it was occupied by the standowner only. If it happened that Mr Nkosi managed to find a cow, he'd slaughter it. Then send a message to our school's principal. The principal would make an announcement during assembly to say at Mr Nkosi's butchery they had slaughtered a cow. Just how long it would take some of the learners, especially those on the other side Driefontein, to inform their parents that there was meat at Mr Nkosi's butchery. By the time the parents arrived there the meat would have been sold out. It was that hard. There was no food and no milk.

TM: When you arrived here how were the houses?

SM: We used to build houses ourselves.

TM: How was your family's house?

SM: It was built with mud and roofed with grass. They looked exactly as those houses outside. We'd cook in one house and sleep in other houses: boys in their own and girls in theirs. That's why people were poisoned, because the house you cooked was never locked. You'd just pull the door. That's how many members of my family – from my father's side - died. Someone came at night and opened the door and found spinach which had already been cooked to be eaten the following day. He/she poured the food with poison. Then older people enjoyed to green vegetables while they were still cold. The following morning they woke and cooked pap and relished with that spinach. That was the end.

TM: Mmm...

SM: Yes, then houses were build with mud. There were very few which were not built with mud.

TM: When you arrived here in the 1950s were there roads as is the case today?

SM: In terms of the then demarcation you could tell that here it was supposed to be a road. But it would be a big hole in which you could even fit a cow and bury it in there. Cars wouldn't travel there. I can still Mr Ndlovu, who stayed in that white house over there (point southwards) but he lived in eGoli. Whenever he came home he'd hire someone and pay him to close the holes in the road. Mr Ndlovu had a car. So he just wanted to be able to manoeuvre his car until he reached his house. Roads were there just in name. Then people were taxed, some for passes and dogs, and vehicles. Here in Driefontein people used to pay for their vehicles and dogs in Wakkerstroom. Our headquarters was Wakkerstroom. Yes, people used to pay tax for all those things, but roads were not maintained. Actually there were no roads. Only those riding bicycles could move around.

TM: When your family arrived here did they buy the land or were you tenants?

SM: We were tenants. The family rented at Dosina Mkhize's house. Dosina was Saul Mkhize's aunt. She had two children, Colgate (son) and a daughter. But when we started living there aunty had already passed on. Her children lived in eGoli. Yes, uBaba Colgate lived at Sophiatown. Like I said, people here deserted this place. One day while staying there we had another aunt saying to our mother 'you must leave this house because Dosina's children have sold it. You must move to my house'. They sold the house without notifying us.

TM: They sold it to someone...

SM: Someone they were staying with in eGoli. That person arrived and informed that he had bought that place. But by then we had already heard about this transaction.

TM: Where this aunt living then?

SM: In eGoli, at Emdeni... No, at Zola 3, Soweto.

TM: Wasn't anyone living in her house?

SM: No, there was no one. We were the first people to live in this stand.

TM: Did you have to build your own house or was the house already built?

SM: We built our own house. We first built a four room, with corrugated zinc. Then we built another small house on the side and this was a mud-house.

TM: Who was building these houses for you?

SM: My brothers. They were staying in Jabulani. They didn't like this place. They'd visit during the holidays and then leave.

TM: AS you were growing up did you attend school?

SM: Yes. I started my schooling here in Driefontein and the school went up to Standard 6. I have my Standard 6 certificate.

TM: What was the name of the school?

SM: It was Driefontein Bantu Combined School. It was from Sub-standard A up to Standard 6. It was Driefontein Bantu School under Bantu Education. Everything was Bantu, Bantu. After Standard 6 ... You see, then we'd go to eGoli one-by-one to start our secondary education. My older brother, whom I came after, went to Dr W.B. Vilakazi ... No, not at Dr Vilakazi but at Naledi. When my turn arrived to go to eGoli I went to Musi High. My younger sister, who lived in Piet Retief, studied at Morris Isaacson. And my sister's child – my mother's grandchild – is the one who went to Dr Vilakazi. I studied there until Standard 8, which was JC (Junior Certificate). We were certificated again. I then went to Natal, at eMadadeni where I did my matric. The school was in the location. Our mother lived in Jabulani in spite of the fact that we had a home in Driefontein. There was no one looking after the house. Because there was no one at home then one day thieves broke into our house. Because of poverty, thieves then used to steal sheep from the neighbouring farms and hid them in our house. Actually they turned our house into a shop where they sold their stolen goods. Remember it was a deserted house. One day my mother while in Jabulani saw the police arrive. I think by then they had connected with the police down here to say in that house lived thieves, implying that it was the owner of the house. They brought her to Driefontein. But she explained to them that she didn't leave anyone at home. She informed them

that she was living with her children in eGoli. You see, I'm the second from last at home. She trusted me and the last born. So she said to the police 'When these two start to work I'll return home'. The older ones didn't want anything to do with Driefontein.

TM: Boys?

SM: And girls. The first three were our older sisters and they were followed by three boys, and then it was us in the end. We continued studied even though it was hard. We used to buy everything for ourselves. I mean, we bought Geography textbooks. We didn't have a father. And our mother was old to the extent that in reality we the last two were supposed to be her grandchildren. She didn't have means to support us. So we'd go to school and after a while break and stay at home. While on break we'd find work. As a result we conceived children in the process. But our mother was very strong. She encouraged us to continue with our studies.

TM: What was her name?

SM: Eliza. One of the streets here is named after her. She was the first ambassador here of the ANC (African National Congress). Yes, Eliza Mtshali. I remember her telling us that she was going to meet Chief Albert Luthuli eGoli. When [Nelson] Mandela was arrested ... No, when he ran away. Who ran away? Was it [Oliver] Tambo? Who stayed at Wattville, in Benoni?

TM: It was Tambo.

SM: Yes. My mother knew his house there. She told us that when they arrived there – I can't remember who she said they had to meet there or they went there to see someone – when they tried to march in the street – then they were prohibited from doing that – the police arrived. Then they used to call the police vehicle *kwelakwela* (climb in-climb in). It was yellow in colour. Our mother told us that then Oliver Tambo then said – I don't know whether he used a loudhailer or what – but he told them that there were boxes full of eggs. He said take these eggs and hit these police with them. They hit the windscreen with the eggs. The windscreen turned yellow. The police forced to leave the area. But the day one of these leaders was arrested my told us she was there. Mama Mkhize brought someone who was also carrying recorders like you interviewing my mother. I've asked umama Mkhize after my mother had passed away about person but she said she doesn't remember. In that interview I saw my mother become inspired in a way that I've never seen her before. She said 'I never thought that one day *ucongolose* (Congress – ANC) would be unbanned while I'm still alive'. She narrated the history of the ANC dating it back to Newclare, where she said Mandela's law offices were. She said they were there at Newclare, although she didn't remember what they were doing there, but the place they went to was underground and there were wooden stairs going up. She said she saw a man climbing down the stairs fast and his eyes looked like those of *ibhele* (bear). And she asked about him she was told to ask from Lillian Ngoyi. Then she was told that it was Hastings Banda and was from prison. That's Hastings Banda from Malawi. Now because my mother was old she called him Histrings Banda (laughs). I even Mandela she used to call him Mbandela. She used to say to us '*Nima ngiyamazi uMbandela esengumfana phambi kokuthi a boshwe* (I know Mandela when he was a young man before he was incarcerated). A certain teacher arrived to teach at Qedela. When this gentleman went past our house our mother called us ... Our mother was a born politician. She pointed at that teacher and said 'Do you see that man I last Mbandela when he was his age before he was arrested'. At that time that name was respected greatly. You wouldn't call out the name Mandela when the police were around. If a policeman were to hear saying Mandela it'll stop and ask how do you know Mandela and which Mandela were you talking about. We grew up

respecting that name. You know, after the arrest of Lillian Ngoyi and the other one was Elizabeth Mafikeng ... Oh, there's a place where my mother had gone to. She and other women went there to bid Elizabeth Mafikeng farewell. She was leaving with her children. The government had banished her. She went into exile. Her children were shown the piece of paper and told that your mother had transgressed this law and this one. Mafikeng's children appeared in the newspapers, I think even in *Ilanga lase Natal*. They banished Elizabeth Mafikeng and Lillian Ngoyi remained behind. My mother and some of the women were wearing big ugly hats (laughs). She honoured that hat and she'd boast and say 'this hat was a gift from Lillian Ngoyi'. But Mandela's arrest, the government banned the organisation, and it threatened with jail anyone who'd be heard saying *ucongolose*. My mother took her uniform and wrapped it and put it inside a plastic bag and put it under a mattress.

TM: Wow

SM: They were involved in an accident coming back from the station on a horse cart.

TM: Who had sent them?

SM: It was ubaba Ndlangamandla. But he was calling himself by another name. He had sent to go and spread the gospel of the ANC everywhere. There was a place where they used to go to called Comondale. On their way I don't know what happened. But the horses started kicking and the person who was controlling the cart couldn't calm them down. They were badly hurt.

TM: After you had completed your schooling at eMadadeni what did you do?

SM: I came back

TM: To Driefontein?

SM: Yes, to Driefontein. That's when my younger sister and I started working. Schools then could employ untrained teachers. As long as you had matric.

TM: Hawu? When did you finish at eMadadeni?

SM: It was in 1974.

TM: When you started working here?

SM: Yes. I worked for a while. I left again.

TM: After you had returned to Driefontein where did you find employment?

SM: I started at eMpumalanga – then this province was called Eastern Transvaal. Mpumalanga was next to Komatipoort. That's where I started to teach.

TM: And where were you staying?

SM: Inside the school. It was a boarding school – Shongwe. Nkomaasi is further down. Shongwe was inland, at Hectorspruit. That's where I started to teach.

TM: And during this period did you visit Driefontein?

SM: I would travel from Hectorspruit to eGoli, because I had left my child with my mother there. When my sister and I started passing at school and it looked like we were going to finish school,

our mother told us that she didn't want us to work in eGoli. She said people who work in eGoli they end up thinking and behaving like people from eGoli. They no longer want to go back home. She said she liked to farm. She grew up on the farms owned by Germans ... [disturbed: someone knocking on the door]. Remember that we had a home although it was deserted. When we started to work our my said she was taking us back home with her to stay with her at home. The older children didn't want to come back here. In fact they were saying we should sell everything and move to eGoli. Our mother refused. When my sister and I started working we brought our mother back home. We build and extended our home. My mother stayed there with child. While working at Komatipoort I would first go to eGoli and then come home. I did that for two years. From there I went to KwaZulu, in Paulpetersburg.

TM: In the two years when you were travelling from Komatipoort to eGoli and then to Driefontein did you witness any changes in Driefontein?

SM: What sort of change?

TM: You said some people moved in...

SM: Yes, there were quiet a number of people in Driefontein then. Those were the people that I said we being chased away from the neighbouring farms. Those are the people made Driefontein what it is today. Many of the standowners, except perhaps for the Mkhize's, when attempts to forcibly remove Driefontein were made agreed that people should be moved. They argued that people should sell their land and get money, then leave. Those from outside who had moved in and couldn't go to eGoli said 'No, we're not going anywhere'. Those were the people who really helped Mr Mkhize and the Council Board to resist the removals. Most of the standowners had agreed to the removals because they would've been paid for their land. Remember the original buyers of this land were no longer alive then. Those who remained were the sons who, in most cases, were living in eGoli and didn't care about this place. Luckily they had rented out their places to the tenants and they would come back home once a year to collect rent. Here we used to pay rent once a year. Those who were from the farms resisted that this place shouldn't be removed, assisting Mr Mkhize. There were very few standowners who supported the campaign against the removals. Many of them had already agreed.

TM: When did you first learn about the news that Driefontein should move?

SM: I first learnt about it in 1982 or 1983. We were told that Driefontein must move because a dam was going to be built. And in that dam there would snakes and it would cause a cold weather.

TM: Who was saying all these things?

SM: It were the police and those who came here to build the dam.

TM: How did they inform you about this? Did they call a community meeting?

SM: They called meetings which were held in schools. There they would describe only the beautiful things about the removals. They told us that the government has already bought a beautiful place for us in Lochiel. It would move us there and compensate the standowners. The standowners were promised that with their monies they could become business people, because the government had built shops as well in Lochiel.

TM: Who were these people telling this?

SM: The standowners. At school learners were told to inform their parents that there would be a meeting for the standowners. Actually a member of the community was invited. Some of those who were at eGoli came to Driefontein to attend these meetings. This happened until the day Mr Mkhize was shot and killed. It was on Good Friday. That was the time people held these meetings, because it were holidays. People were angry. We attended these meetings in schools, where we were told to leave this place because life was harder here; the nearest town was far and that this place was dry. And that now a dam was to be built. The standowners were also promised compensation. Furthermore, the government promised the standowners an advanced lifestyle in Lochiel than in Driefontein. That's when the standowners agreed.

TM: They agreed

SM: Yes, many of them had agreed. Mr Mkhize came to one of these meetings. He listened and then raised questions. He had a map of this land. I don't know where he got it from, perhaps from the lawyers based in eGoli. He also had documents stating the history of this place. It was stated that this place was hereditary. It had ownership; the person who bought this land had a title deed and therefore owned it right up to his great-grandchildren. And no one had the right to sell it. The land belonged to the Mkhizes, the Mtshalis, and so on. Then Mr Mkhize showed those documents to those who were to tell us to move. He asked them if people move who would then own this place. They said 'GG ... Then the local authorities here were called GG (General Government). They said 'GG would compensate the standowners'. He refused and said 'they had no right to remove the ownership of this place from its owners to GG or whoever. This place was hereditary, which would be owned by the different generations'. That's where the clash arose. Some people agreed with Mr Mkhize. But there were also those who rejected his views. They said he was wasting their time.

TM: Oh, they said that?

SM: Yes. They said he was wasting their time. They should be moving now to Lochiel where they would establish their stores and be compensated. But what they didn't understand was that Driefontein was far bigger than the piece of land allocated to us in Lochiel. Here each stand was 10 morgens. But in Lochiel we were going to receive small places and be given some money. The majority of the standowners, I can say about 80 per cent, agreed to the removals. I can still remember uVusimuzi, Saul Mkhize, came here and said 'My family's stands are not for sale'. The tenants agreed with him, and supported him. My mother and other women also supported him. Then they said they're going to invite Black Sash from Johannesburg to come and help us here. At this stage I can still remember that even the magistrate was interfering in this issue. The person who normally came here to discuss this issue came from Wakkerstroom in possession of a letter from the magistrate, declaring that this place was being removed. This person said 'We're removing you from here because we're going to build a dam'. People responded 'A dam is water and we need water. Why should we be removed closer to the water? We need water, so we're not going anywhere'. A clash erupted. The first clash was between those who wanted to move and those who were against the removals.

TM: Who was leading those who wanted to move?

SM: One of their leaders was Leonard Mjwaga, Ruben Vilakazi – he passed away recently. Actually they were led by a chief – chief Yende. But the majority of the people didn't recognise him as a chief here. He was in favour of the removals. Some people supported him. They formed their own board or committee as well. Their board was against the Council Board. That's after Mr

Mkhize had arrived to form his own board, and that board refused to move. Initially, the clash was between the residents and not with the government. Some of the people did leave Driefontein and bought places next to Amsterdam. I remember Mjwaga and Vilakazi went to live and established their stores there. They readied themselves for us their customs, but we had no intention of leaving this place. We fought against the removals ... [disturbed] People fought. At night others informed on others.

TM: How?

SM: During the day one would side with your group and listen to what you were saying and then would take the information to another group. That's what killed Mr Gesi. He had contacted Black Sash in eGoli, which told us about the history of this place. It informed the people that this land was bought by Pixley Ka Seme. Those who wanted to leave became angry. I suspect the law stipulated that when the government enforces the removals it had remove everybody. But then if there were others who removed this tempered with their plans. After all it would have been difficult for the government to estimate how many stands it would have to build in the places where it wanted to remove us to. So those who wanted to move felt that we were wasting their time. Black Sash visited us here in Driefontein. Informers started working as well. Mr Mkhize would arrive here together with Black Sash and call a meeting. The informers would also attend the meeting to listen to what was being said. In the meeting Mr Mkhize made it clear that this place belonged to our great-grandparents and no one had the right to remove us. Sometimes the other board led by people like Leonard also called its meetings and would encourage people to move. They argued that there were no roads here and that's why they were in favour of the removals. They also said they were expecting to be compensated for their land; and that those who were against the removals were tenants, the standowners wanted to move. They insisted that they wanted to move. But the official responsible for Driefontein's removal said to remove it he had to remove everybody from Driefontein. I think he said he was told that there were 300 plots at the new place to be occupied by the people of Driefontein. That's how the removals failed. But before then the situation was really, leading to Mkhize's death. He used to arrive at the school where I was teaching. Our school then was next to the dam. He'd arrive and request to speak to the principal. He'd ask the principal to tell the learners that the removals were wrong, because this land was bought. And that where the government wants to take us to the land wouldn't be the same as it is here. There we would be forced to be under a chief. He said the place where they want to take us to it was a Trust; and no one would claim to own the land. He emphasised that the learners should inform their parents about this. Well, some of the parents didn't even bother to return to Driefontein. They instead stayed in eGoli. He started coming often to hold the meetings here. Some of the people supported him, but others didn't. And this led to some of the people beginning to label him as *iphokula* (terrorist). They said he was a terrorist and was going to cause trouble for the community with the government. They didn't like him. What caused the forced removals to fail in Driefontein it was because the community was divided in between. But the standowners wanted to leave. We kept on fighting and in the end we were informed that we'd no longer be taken to Lochiel. Okay, those whose houses were closer to the dam were compensated. You see, what happened was that the dam was closed somewhere and the water started streaming in people's yards. Then GG bought a place up there and removed those people who lived closer to the dam – and compensated them as well. But their new places were less than 10 morgens. They were given money to build new houses for themselves.

TM: Where is this place?

SM: Here in Driefontein. It is up there, and that place is bit drier. Yes, GG bought a farm over there and to settle those people. That place was known as *emazozweni* (shack settlement). When the standowners who had left realised that Driefontein was no longer going to be moved they then returned. When we asked 'why are you back?' They angrily responded 'where did we say we were going? Don't talk nonsense. We are here to stay'. They returned and stayed. It was not long before GG started renovating the roads in Driefontein. I think GG did that for its trucks to be able to move around, because they were bringing back those people who had left; and moving those who were living closer to the dam. It was the first time for some of us to a grader with our own eyes. We started seeing roads. And witnessed some small changes. You see, during apartheid we as teachers were called civil servants. And as a civil servant you were not supposed to poke your nose in political matters. We were aloof to what was happening. We didn't interfere.

TM: Wow?

SM: But we heard about what was happening and that GG was also involved; and now constructing the roads. The Black Sash and Council Board went to look for a grader to clear dirt on the road, so that it could be easy to move by car on the road. I think that grader was hired. It was that grader that killed a person, a Mr Msibi. Coming here we passed his house. He was driving it. I don't know what happened but he went under it and it grinded him.

TM: Mmm... Mr Msibi?

SM: Yes, Mr Msibi. And that grader ended at the deep of the dam. They drove it there to fix a road and broke down there on a dry land. They left it there. The owners took long before they come to get it. During that time the dam was spreading and it finally swallowed it.

TM: So that's where it ended?

SM: Yes, it's under that dam. Initially we could see it, but after a while we couldn't see it again.

TM: Now after people had fought so hard against the removals and indeed Driefontein got a reprieve, and those who had left returned how was life then?

SM: It improved. And what caused it to improve was because we had roads, there were whites from the neighbouring farms who come to Driefontein to sell their goods such as milk. During the times of the Council Board led by Mkhize whites from the neighbouring farms wouldn't dare come to Driefontein. If they did they would be chased away. Mkhize would say 'don't come here. You're not welcome here. You don't even assist us. Instead, you're chasing away black people from your farms. Out!' The situation improved. Not long stores were established. The butchery of Mr Gumede was established during that time. He found a license somehow and not long we had a butchery. But it didn't function optimally because he had to slaughter cows for himself. But it made a difference, although some times we'd find meat and on others we would not. And ubaba Leonard opened a tuck shop where he sold a variety of goods, including liquor. Yes, a number of stores were established here even though many of them were a bit distant away. A bakery was also established, which produced bread. But it didn't produce everyday. I think we got fresh bread twice in a week. But there was a difference that I could now buy bread. Remember before all these things were not there. I mean now you could say 'I'm going to buy bread at Mjwaga's store'. I'm going to buy meat at the butchery'. Some times you'd find and in other times you wouldn't.

TM: Yes, but there was some improvement.

SM: There was some kind of improvement. We had that the ANC was talking and it was not long before we heard that the law enforcing influx control was going to end. The ANC then was still banned. Then PW Botha began to ask black people 'In reality what is it that you want?' Then people responded and said 'There were people who are from Standerton, Piet Retief but they can't settle in eGoli. But a German would arrive from Germany and be allowed to go to eGoli and have a partnership in a company that employs black South African. And these are foreigners in our country but own houses in City Deep and elsewhere. They're now citizens of this country'. When the ANC said away with influx control, the government said it was prepared to allow intermarriage, to say a black person could marry a white person. The ANC said this is not what we said we wanted. It continued to insist that it wanted this law abolished, so that our children could find employment in eGoli. They should be free to go to eGoli and not seek permission. Then the law was abolished. I remember I observed that January didn't have to go to Wakkerstroom anymore to get permission to go to eGoli. I asked him about this and he told me that they're no longer discharged from work.

TM: Today we've attained democracy but when you think back about Driefontein how would you describe it today?

SM: Great improvement. Firstly, after my mother's death, we noticed that we now have electricity. And it was because of the efforts of the Council Board. The members of that board used to request help from companies or whoever to say can you install electricity for our people. I understand that they went to KwaNdebele to learn how a homeland could have electricity. You know, here we knew electricity to be in the townships because that's where GG installed it. But when they arrived there they were told that the people of KwaNdebele received electricity directly from Eskom. And they were taken through the process of accessing electricity in a rural area. After they returned they contacted Eskom. That's the first improvement. And today we're able to watch television.

TM: Then who were the members of the Council Board?

SM: The chairperson was Saul Mkhize. After Mkhize was killed Modki Maseko took over, because he was the deputy. The secretary was BD Nkonyane – he was passed away. It was Modki Maseko, Steven Maseko. Then Zebulon Ndlangamandla had distanced himself from its activities. But he was still a member. Jane (Vilakazi) was also a member. I can still remember that Jane attended Mr Mkhize's murder case. I can still remember Mrs Madlala was also a member. Yes, now I remember that Nkonyane was also a teacher. But because teachers were not allowed to be involved in politics, he quickly pulled out.

TM: Besides electricity is there anything else you can identify as a...

SM: Water reservoir. They first installed a steel tap and to use it we had to insert cards. The office I found in that's where we used to buy those cards to get water. You could buy for R10 and it'll last you for two weeks. But those taps were from where I'm staying, and they were placed along the streets. I can still remember officials from Water Affairs arrived here to inform the standowners that they were there to install steel taps which you needed a paid card to get water 'what must we do?' They wanted to know where they should install them. The standowners said install them in our yards. One tap per plot, and that tap would be used by the standowner and his/her tenants. The minister then it was Kader Asmal. He flatly refused arguing 'I don't want anyone to have control over that doesn't belong to him/her'. He said the taps should be installed next to streets. They installed them there but they were soon vandalised. But we had already

started using them before they were vandalised. Asmal was trying to avoid the situation where standowners would determine when people could get water in his yard and who. You know, some people would say after five I don't want anyone getting water in my yard. That's why he said the taps should be installed next to the streets. In a street you could have about four taps. But then people started to vandalise them. They changed and installed small taps. *Haa!*, those broke in a day. Then the residents suggested that because there were water pipes placed along the roads neighbours should join hands and buy one pipe to connect to those in the road and draw water into their yards. I can't tell you who taught our people to connect those pipes, but they started connecting them. The Water Affairs' pipes were on the road and these people connected with a pipe that runs through to the houses. From there each person could connect into their own houses. That was a great improvement. However, in our street Water Affairs had placed an asbestos pipe which they made it clear that it was not supposed to be drilled to open a hole in order to connect the pipes. We were told that it was a feeder pipe. As a result we were left without water. We requested water from the neighbours who were able to connect their pipes. It was interesting to see people having water in their own yards and houses. We asked them for water. They let us have water. When Water Affairs tried to install a meter in our area people refused and told the officials that we don't have water here. I mean even today we don't pay for water. Then the water we're receiving is unhealthy because it has chlorine. They're supposed to be purified and that's expensive. Our Mayor usually says 'In Driefontein people do not care for water because they don't pay for them'. I mean sometimes you'd find that a pipe had burst open and water was running through the area but no official would care to fix the pipe. Then the caring residents would report the pipe to the municipality. Up to this day we don't have meters to calculate the water usage. For me to ultimately have water in the house my neighbours had connected their pipe. Our house was one of the few houses without water. I went to the council to complain. I told them that mine was one of the 20 houses in our street without water. We got water from one of the vandalised taps up there. I requested the municipality to connect a pipe that would reach my yard, then we'd sort ourselves out. We didn't want to get water from other people's yards. Indeed, our councillor assisted us. A pipe was connected and taps were installed from up there up to few houses away from mine. We were once again left with water. Immediately after they had finished working on that day I saw them. I asked a certain man who was working there and he told me that our councillor show them the route where the pipes should be connected, hence they ended up there. I said but we're the people who do not have water. I informed that where they've installed taps those people already have water in their houses. He said he was just following instructions. He then explained to me that some of the standowners refuse to have pipes connect through their yards. So now they had to dig and place the pipes in the streets and not in people's yards. I pleaded with to give me some few minutes to go and talk to umama Eva, a standowner, to allow them to connect the pipe through her yard. They agreed. After two weeks they returned and asked me how did the standowner respond. I said let me take you to her. We asked umama Eva and she agreed. But in our case they installed a small pipe. It wasn't the big blue pipe. They connected that pipe up to the gate of my yard. Then they installed a tap. *Haa!*, our people. Now they started bringing their laundry to wash in front of my yard. It became a mess in the street. And when the officials from the municipality arrived in our street they demanded to see me. They'd say 'Hey, what's all this. Didn't we tell you to safeguard this tap?' You know, our people would send their children to get water from the tap and the children would break it. All of sudden I'll see water spraying all over the place. Then they'd come to report to me that the tap was broken. I've had enough. So after a while I connected my own pipes and installed a tap inside my house. That broken remained there for years. I just kept quiet and minded my business. But still they'd come to report to me about that tap. I remember they broke

it again during the holiday of August 2009 – it was Women’s Day. They broke it on the 8th. The whole of that day and the following day water was streaming from that tap. I kept quiet. I said the people who use that tap should go and report it. They streamed so hard I even felt sorry. My other concern was that I knew that this water was not healthy, because it had chlorine. On the 9th some of the residents reported the tap to Manana, who was working at the Reservoir. Manana arrived and asked what was happening there. I said this tap is always like that. ‘Every now and then they break it and I have to call the municipality to report. I said shut it down’. They closed it. Some of the people called me names I just kept quiet. I asked them what did they do when the water was streaming here for the whole night? They shifted to another tap up there; they broke it as well. GG closed it. It was hard. But then there were improvements. I mean, GG improved the roads. Then we had our second butchery. In fact, it was a butchery on the one side and a general dealers’ store on the other. After my mother had passed away, I think it was in 1990, 91 ... No, in 1993 electricity was installed. We also used cards to buy it. If you bought a R10 coupon it could last you for the whole month. It was good because you measure how much you used electricity. And it was easy to see when the meter was going down. Electricity was really a great improvement. We’re still experiencing problems with water. I finally installed this tap inside my house in 2008.

TM: Mama, I think we’ve covered a lot today. And it’s getting darker outside...

SM: Yes, and that woman (referring to Gille de Vlieg) is waiting for you outside. If you have more questions I’ll be happy to tell you about the history of Driefontein. I know it.

TM: I think what you shared with us today will really help. If there’s a need, we’ll come back to you with more questions before we write the report. I have your contact details. At least then we’d have a transcript to check if there are gaps in the story. But what you told us at least would give us an idea about what happened in Driefontein.

SM: I don’t think there are many people who can tell you about Driefontein like me, even Jane. Because she arrived here when she was about to get married. But she’s been here for a while now. She arrived here in the 1980s. I was born and bred here.

TM: Mama, I’d to thank you for the opportunity to meet you and the information you shared with us. It’s very interesting, and I’m sure it’ll add to the one we already have and the one we’re still going to get.

TM: Okay. So it’s Jane tomorrow.

TM: Yes, it’s umama Jane tomorrow.

[END]