

DETAILS OF INTERVIEW

Acc. no. KCAV 111
of tape(s)
Side 2

Transcript available
H.

Interviewee: Mr. Molooi

Address: Chesterville

Occupation: Retired

Date of interview: 23/2/1979

Length: 35 mins

Session: One

Place of interview: Chesterville

Subject of interview: ICU, Durban in the 1930's

Interviewer(s): A.Manson/D.Collins

Interpreter(s): R. Mngomezulu

Others present: Members of Mr Molloi's Family

Photographs: One of Interviewee

Papers: -

Letter thanking for interview: -

Any additional information: -

(1 minute = approx. 14 digital units on counter)

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Interview with Mr H. MOLOOI
at Chesterville
on 23/2/79

Interpreter: Mr R. Mngomezulu. ([Interpreter poses question] or
[Interpreter...])

Interviewers: A. Manson, D. Collins [Reply through interpreter] in the text
Indicates that the interpreter
has been used.)

KCA v 111

Length: 35 minutes.

Background note:

Interviewer: Mr Molooi was acquainted with Mrs Ncgobo who is, until mid-1978 was the only living daughter of Langalibalele and she died in mid-1978 at the age of 106 or 107.

Q Could you ask him what he remembers about Mrs Ncgobo.
[Interpreter poses question]

A I remember that .. she was in connection with the looking after women at the I.C.U. I would simply call that a police for the women's section of the I.C.U. That hall was at Old Dutch Road in Durban. [Reply through interpreter].

Q Does he know what her duties were there? [Interpreter poses question]

A It was to look after the people, in fact, in short she was nothing else but somebody who looks after the doors when people enter. [Reply through interpreter]

Q Did she know Champion? [Interpreter ...]

A She was working for Mr A.W. G. Champion the late. [Reply through interpreter]

Q Did she ever tell Mr Molooi anything about Mr Champion?
[Interpreter ...]

A She told me that Mr Champion was the head of the I.C.U.
[Reply through interpreter]

Q Did Mr Molooi have anything to do with the I.C.U. [Interpreter..]

A Yes, I was also a member of the I. C. U. We were members who were having green cards. [Reply through interpreter]

Q What does that mean? [Interpreter...]

A There is no significance attached to that. It only means that when you have that green card it meant that you are a member of the I. C. U. [Reply through interpreter]

Q What benefits did the I. C. U. offer him? [Interpreter...]

A It is only that the I. C. U. told us that it was just for the betterment of the settlement of the African people in Durban. [Reply through interpreter]

Q He doesn't feel he got any benefits himself? [Interpreter...]

A I wouldn't definitely say that we got so much benefit from it. But it is the I. C. U. I believe, that gave us the permission that when a European is about to sack you he has got to give you one day notice [Reply through interpreter]

Q What was Mr Molooi doing at this stage, where was he working? [Interpreter...]

A During this time I was in Standerton in the Transvaal. [Reply...]

Q What was his job? [Interpreter...]

A I was just a labourer in the farm. [Reply through interpreter].

Q When did Mr Molooi come to Durban? [Interpreter...]

A I arrived in Durban in 1933 [Reply .. Interpreter]

Q And have you lived in Chesterville ever since? [Interpreter poses question]

A When I arrived here in Durban there was a place called Somtse Bantu Men's Hostel. I used to live there until 1943, when we were transferred into this location, Chesterville [Reply through interpreter]

Q What was that .. Somtse was it? <Interpreter: Somtse Rd, just off Jeff Taylor Road > that was a hostel? <Interpreter: Yes > Can he tell us about life there in the hostel? [Interpreter...]

A It was just that life .. life where you find why men all by themselves. You know hostel life .. all locations that were there were the married quarters at Somtse, married quarters at Lamontville, Chesterville by then was not there. [Reply through Interpreter].

Q Where was he working then? [Interpreter...]

A When I arrived in Durban I worked for Norman Burns, that was in Smith Street. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q What was the job you were doing? [Interpreter...]

A It was a garage. I was an assistant to panel-beaters. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q I wondered if Mr Molooi could go back a bit and tell us about his early days when he was farming, where he was born,

Q and where his parents came from. [Interpreter ...]

A He says this is now the most important thing because he wanted to tell you about his own life. He is prepared now to start from scratch up to the present about his own life. [Reply through Interpreter.]

Interviewer: We'll take it slowly. Take a section and translate, take a section and translate [Interpreter relates]

104 A My father was born at [tape indistinct] in Basutoland.

<Interviewer: Does he know what date about?> <Interpreter: He has forgotten the date> <Interviewer: Was it before the Great War, before the Boer war?> [Interpreter relates question].

Long before that. It proves that my father was there before the end of the war because our first born in the family, my father's first born was born in 1907, 1902 I'm sorry.

The ones that followed the one born in 1902 was the one that was born in 1906, the other one was born in 1908, and

130 I'm born in 1910, <Interv: 4th October> <Respondent: Yes> [Reply through Interp]

Q Who was the king in Lesotho then? [Interpreter ...]

A I'm not sure who was the king or the chief at that time but when I became aware of everything, my father was under chief Isaac Mofe. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q Let him carry on talking about what he did ... [Interpreter relates]

A I grew up under the careship of my mother's brother in Standerton. That's where I grew up and then that's where I got married. As from there

then I came down to Durban to work here. [Interpreter]

Q How long did he work on the farm in Standerton? [Interpreter...]

A I remember there happened to be a strike in Johannesburg in the year 1922, that's when I was aware of everything that was happening. I worked there up to 1933 in Standerton. But he remembers the strike that took place in Johannesburg. <Interviewer: Was this the white strike?> Yes, it was the strike of the white people. [Reply thru Interpreter]

Q Why does he remember that strike? [Interpreter poses question]

A I remember because the very people, white men we were working for were the people who were taking us to Johannesburg carrying guns to go and fight there. [Interpreter...]

Q To go and fight those strikers? <Interpreter: Yes> Why were they doing this, does he know? [Interpreter poses question]

A The miners were striking, in fact the people who were striking were not the Africans but the Europeans themselves were striking against their bosses. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q Why were his bosses taking the guns? [Question put by Interpreter]

A I would definitely won't know because we were told that they were serving as soldiers perhaps fighting for the interest of the Boers or the interest of the English people. I'm not sure. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q Why did he move down to Durban? [Interpreter poses question]

A It was because I would say, I had got some emancipation of some sort because, when living in Standerton I was no longer under the jurisdiction of my father. I had to come and work and stand on my own, because I was already married by that time. [Reply/Interp.]

Q Was he away from the jurisdiction of the chief as well? [Interpreter poses Q.]

A The very fact that I was already in Standerton, I was already away from the jurisdiction of the chief. Because I'm born right in Lesotho. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q It was 1933 he moved down to Durban? (Interpreter: Yes) Does he remember what they call the Great Depression, when no-one had jobs. [Interpreter poses question]

A I'm not quite sure, but I remember that during the death of King George in 1934 I was already here. [Reply through Interpreter]

Q Does he remember when they had to first start carrying passes?
[Interpreter poses q.]

A I can't remember but I would tell you that by 1926 when I left Johannesburg for Standerton I was already carrying this pass. I started paying this tax in 1927 [Interpreter ...]

Q The hut tax? (Interpreter: Poll tax) How did the people feel about this tax, does he remember? [Interpreter ...]

A It was quite a shocking thing because we were not getting any money but we are supposed to pay money to the Government, a sum of a Pound (£1.00). That's why it

was so much shocking to us and it was something which we could not take. It was something abhorrent to us. [Interpreter ...]

Q Did Mr Molooi take part in any resistance against this? [Interpreter]

A I'm quite aware of the fact that there were people who were against this pass law but unfortunately I didn't take part in it but I sympathized with the movement because to me it was so abhorrent that I couldn't stick it. [Interpreter ...]

Q In this article it said Mrs Ngcobo was involved in women's pass resistance, Does Mr Molooi remember anything about this? [Interpreter ...]

A I quite remember, it was during the time when she was a member of the I.C.U. [Interpreter ...]

Q What was it like for Mr Molooi to go first of all from Lesotho to Johannesburg and then from Johannesburg to Durban, because they're big cities, because he's from the country. What was it like for him to come from a small country to the big city. [Interpreter relates question]

A It was quite an adventure because I was from a small town to big town especially when I lived in the Transvaal I was somebody who had a persistent headache, but when I left the Transvaal for Durban well, my health became moderate, almost well I would say. In that manner then I became

272 [tape indistinct]

[Reply through interpreter]

Q Did Mr Molooi go to school?

273

285 A I went for a while at Standerton .. just for a while and from there when I came down to Durban I went to Jeff Taylor Street that was a night school here in Durban. I would say that was .. that time called Taylor Street recently it is known as Lorem
[Interpreter]

Q Is Mr Molooi a Christian, can he tell us anything about the missionaries? [Interpreter...]

A [Laughs] I would tell you this much, my mother's brother was a Reverend of the Baptist Church as I am today a Deacon in the Baptist church [Reply through interpreter]

Q Did Reverend Molooi get his training in Lesotho? [Interpreter]

A Now the point arises here madam, with us an uncle its not my brother's father its my mother's .. no, an uncle is not my father's brother, it is my mother's brother. So its not Mr Molooi, its Mr Silebesi. Bearing the name of his mother. With you, your brother's what-you-call "father" is your uncle, its not that with us, thats why I understand you say Mr Molooi.
[Interpreter's explanation mainly]

Q I was asking whether Mr Molooi had been trained for the church, he, himself. [Interpreter..]

A I was trained from Standerton, I proceeded with my studies here at Umgeni Road under Reverend Duma. [Reply thru. Interpreter]

Q Mr Molooi said that he became a welder or something, was it a welder? A panelbeater. Can you tell us did you carry

on being a panelbeater ... what the wages were like ... ?
[Interpreter]

A I'm a very experienced panelbeater. [Laughs] [Reply through interpreter]

Q What were the wages like? [Interpreter...]

A It was £1.00, two bob a week [Reply thru. interpreter]

Q How long did he carry on being a panelbeater? [Interpreter]

A I worked for the panelbeating department for a period of six years, after that I went to the body building department, bus body building department. And conclusively in the same firm I worked for forty-two years. [Reply thru. interpreter.]

Q And did he become a supervisor? [Interpreter...]

A I was a chargehand, normally called induna. [Reply through interpreter]

Q And how are the wages there? [Interpreter...]

A At the utmost when I left I was earning a lousy R25.00 having worked for 42 years

Q Did they give him pension? [Interpreter..]

A I would tell you from the firm they gave me approximately, although I'm not going to be specific on the sum, about R600 and presently I'm no longer getting anything from that firm, I'm now pensioned under this Government pension scheme. [Reply through interpreter]

Q What were the Whites mainly supervised him. How were the white men who looked .. ? [Interpreter..]

A I would say they were good to me but ... when it comes to money ah! they were not good because they were not giving me as much as I wanted to get. But they were good to me, not to the whole staff, also. [Interpreter...]

Q Does he feel he could have done some of the jobs the white men were doing? [Interpreter...]

A Oh Yes! Yes.
Perfectly [Interpreter.]

Q Did he ever used to travel back to Lesotho to see his family or anything?
[Interpreter poses q.]

A When I get my leave yearly, the first place I think of is back in Lesotho. I always go there. Presently I do have a home. [Interpreter]

Q When he left Lesotho were there lots of men leaving to come and work in South Africa? [Interpreter]

A Plenty of them [Reply through interpreter]

Q Were they all going to work on the mines or what? [Interpreter]

398 A In [tape indistinct] works of life, some went to the mines, some went to work for the shipping industries, some went to work for railways and other firms. [Reply through interpreter]

Q Why were they coming? [Interpreter..]

A Oh Yes. Its quite obvious that it was because of starvation that they had to leave the farms to come and work in the cities.
[Reply through Interpreter]

Q What was it like for those men who had to leave their families there, and work in South Africa. [Interpreter..]

A I wouldn't speak on behalf of the others but generally its not a good thing to do because you'll find that people work for a period of twelve months, up to twelve months, a person will go back to where he is from, and it proves beyond any reasonable doubt that that person did not leave the home because of the wish, it was because of other cause, starvation.
[Reply through Interpreter]

Q Perhaps we could move on to the later time now in Durban. Does he remember for example the days when they used to burn passes and things in the late fifties, early sixties? [Interpreter...]

A I remember during that pass struggle during the times of Mr A. W. G. Champion, the late, that there was some pass struggles.
[Reply thru Interpreter]

Q He doesnt remember the ANC pass burning? [Interpreter]

A uLuthuli?
I remember during the burning of the passes, unfortunately I was not affiliated to any of these organisations that took place at that time. [Interpreter..]