

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MRS MASABATA FLORAH MAFATA

(The interview was conducted by Khotso Pudumo with Mrs M.F. Mafata through Whatsapp, Bloemfontein, on 09 October 2020. Please note the following: **Pudumo**: Interviewer; **Mafata**: Interviewee. Unclear\inaudible speech is indicated by a question mark [?]. [Sic] in most cases indicates a grammar mistake made by interviewee. Text in brackets [] is added for clarity.)

Pudumo: What are your full names?

Mafata: My names are Masabata Florah Mafata.

Pudumo: When and where were you born?

Mafata: [In] Zastron, in 1956-02-12.

Pudumo: Who were your parents?

Mafata: Pulane Adelinah Makhetha.

Pudumo: And your father's names are?

Mafata: I do not know him, my mother did not tell me.

Pudumo: Do you still remember your grandparents, what were their names?

Mafata: My grandmother [was] Emely [Emily] Manama Makhetha.

Pudumo: Where did you spend most of your childhood in Zastron?

Mafata: I [grew up] in Zastron, later [I] moved to Johannesburg with my mother, whereby she worked there, as a kitchen mum [domestic worker]. When I was 15 years [old] a sister to my mother [aunt] took me to Lesotho where I attended school.

Pudumo: You attended school from different places?

Mafata: Yes, at that time school was so special, teachers were respected as parents, even though it was difficult but I can make you laugh. My standard

1, 2, and half of 3 I attended classes with the children of my mother's boss but yet it was nice to have been in school with them. [Voice note interviewee sent to explain something: Last paragraph of that message] White children [learners] and white teachers they loved me, Mr Khotso it was like I was a white person. I enjoyed schooling with white children at that time, everything was nice to me but those classes that I attended I was the only black learner. I was taken to that school by my mother's boss who did not want me to stay at home in the location and not being able to go school. Like staying at home with my mother and not being able to go to school because I was already attending school [from where they moved from to Johannesburg where her mother was working], at that time when I was supposed to stay with my mother. It was so nice for me. Then I moved to Lesotho because then when I arrived there [Lesotho] I was well educated and I was speaking English a lot, spelling and everything in English of mine was good.

Pudumo: Do you still remember the name of that school?

Mafata: I do not remember the name and my mother is deceased, she could have reminded me.

Pudumo: At the time that you were schooling, were you aware of the differences between black and white people? You said that you were the only black learner in that school?

Mafata: I was aware that white people did not pretend, if they like [you] they will show, if they don't [like you] they will also make you see.

Pudumo: Good observation! Now, Mme [Madam] how did you come to Bloemfontein?

Mafata: Whilst I was in high school I met a handsome guy by the [surname] of Mafata. He was also from Bloemfontein, so we were both from [the] Republic. We decided to be together at our original place.

Pudumo: Republic of SA.

Mafata: Thank you for correcting [me].

Pudumo: Mme Florah, tell me how did you experience June 16, 1976?

Mafata: June 16 1976 was terrible. While school children were fighting for Afrikaans language at school, but we really supported that motion [be]cause it was unfair for we Black people, our language was totally not recognised.

Pudumo: You did not experience that education system? In 1976 you were 20 years old, were you working?

Mafata: I was not working and because my high school was from another country. I can really say I did not experience that system of education [Bantu Education].

Pudumo: Ok mme, tell me after meeting the handsome Mr Mafata, did you both get married?

Mafata: But for us who went outside [schooling in another country] we had a very serious problem to get work in the Republic of SA, because we did not know Afrikaans.

Pudumo: I can imagine.

Mafata: We got married in 1980.

Pudumo: Tell me Mme, when did you move to Batho [township] and where in Batho?

Mafata: [In] early 1976, just when I came back from school.

Pudumo: How was life like in Batho during those times?

Mafata: Wow, during those times, life was not as fast as it is now, it was so cool. Except [in] Batho "loc" [location] there were a lot of thugs [tsotsis] and there were places wherein you couldn't pass [there] at night.

Pudumo: And political activism, how was it like?

Mafata: At that time the spirit of politics was very high, but the meetings were held secretly because the police would mostly arrest people who were in a gathering.

Pudumo: Can you tell me please, what do you remember of those secret meetings and where were they held?

Mafata: The meetings were held at Mr Mapikela's house [Ulundi Kaya], also close to the park square [Mapikela Square] I forgot the name of it, but they were held at night and people attending there they would walk one by one on foot, not using cars. It was difficult for them to attend there because it was close to the police station [Batho Police Station].

Pudumo: Who were the leaders that you still remember back then, except Mr Mapikela?

Mafata: Look, I remember Mme Winkie Direko. She was among the learners when the police were trying to arrest the learners because Sehunelo [High School] was one of the schools fighting [fighting for liberation]. Look, when they threw teargas at the learners they ran into people's yards and took clothes that were put on the washing line, to disguise themselves so, that they can go to their homes [unnoticed]. Wow, the names have ran away [struggling to recall them], most of them have passed away. There is this Mr in Bochabela [Township] close to Arena Stadium, Mr Custa, Mme [Aria] Motlolometsi, they are many [but] I have forgotten their names.

Pudumo: You are doing well, Mme, tell me how was schooling like in the 1980s? Do you remember Mme [Martha Moipone] MaMotlhakwana?

Mafata: Yes, I remember Mme MaMotlhakwana.

Pudumo: What do you remember about her?

Mafata: She was a brave woman along with the likes of Mme Winkie Direko. They were not scared of the police and they spoke freely to them [police officers]. Just like Mme Winnie Mandela, they were those kind of women. [In] 1980 it was a terrible time, especially in schools. Learners were on a war path with police, they made their own teargas and faced the police head on, Khotso, and they [learners] fought without fearing anything.

Pudumo: So, there was no schooling in 1980 in Mangaung?

Mafata: Mostly the learners were fighting against Afrikaans classes [Bantu Education that enforced the teaching of [school] subjects in Afrikaans], that is how the fight began.

Pudumo: Now, how did you experience the liberation struggle?

Mafata: This liberation struggle corrected a lot of things that were not correct.

Pudumo: What do you remember regarding the “Berlin Wall” [not the actual Berlin Wall that was in Germany] between Lereko School and Sehunelo School?

Mafata: Khotso, I remember that this wall of Berlin separated Setswana [Sehunelo School of which the medium of instruction was Setswana] and Sesotho [Lereko School of which the medium of instruction was Sesotho].

Pudumo: Thank you so much mme, what else would you like to add or that you remember you didn't include?

Mafata: Can I send some answers please when I remember them. Right now I do not recall because of a lot of questions you asked granny. But I would like to find out when I recall them, can I send them to you?

Pudumo: Thank you so much granny. Tell me, Mme, how many children did you have?

Mafata: Only two, a girl and a boy.

Pudumo: Thank you so much granny. I will type this interview and provide you with a copy of it.

Mafata: Are you happy with how I answered?

Pudumo: No mme, you remembered the things you were able to remember and you are busy as it is Friday. I am very happy.

Mafata: Thank you, be blessed.

Pudumo: God bless you Mme.