

Gladys Mbutu LRC Oral History Project 9 September 2008

Client

Interpreter: Moses Phooka

Accompanied by: Sharita Samuel & 200\224 LRC Attorney

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This is an interview with Gladys Mbutu...Mbutu?
Mbutu, yes.

And it's in Umlazi and it's Tuesday, the 9th of September (2008). Gladys on behalf of the SALS Foundation in the United States, we really want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the LRC, Oral History Project.

My pleasure.

I wondered whether we could start the interview, if you could tell me a little bit about yourself, generally, your background, where you came from, where you live?

Okay, my name is Gladys Mbutu, before I was Phyllis Mzhiye, before I got married. Okay, I grew up in Pietersburg, which is in Northern Natal. I was brought up by my granny, my mother's mother. So, I came into town to look for work; I didn't actually do my Matric, but I went to Standard Nine. It was a JC then at (inaudible) Pietersberg government school. So, when I came here in Durban, I worked as a domestic house, I worked for ten years in one household and they moved, they sold the house and they moved. I didn't want to go with them. So I went into another one, they are Kennedys, we still friends, we still keep in touch, also for ten years. Okay, after them, well I was in love with Moses, I fell in love with Moses, because of the way, at the flat, I couldn't accommodate him at my place, when we wanted to see each other. Okay. After them, a friend of mine found me a job, at Trust Bank, so I moved and got a job at Trust Bank West Street. So, Moses and I...

got married?

Yes, got married in 1970.

And that was still during the Pass Laws...
That's right.

But you were allowed to stay with him?

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At Umlazi because there were houses for Africans. We were not allowed to stay in the backyard of the Europeans. Okay, but as soon as they prepared the location at Umlazi, then we were allowed to stay anywhere.

When did you move here then?

So, I moved here in 1970, not in this house and in H-Section, in 1970; 1969. We got that house and we stayed there so, eventually, we stayed there. So, eventually, it was down there opposite the (inaudible) place, so it was quite a steep hill to come to the station for me and I was working. So, we got a chance to make a cross-transfer with another lady, to get into this house. Okay, so we came here in 1978. I applied for the electricity, I paid for it. He wasnâ\200\231t working. I was working. I didnâ\200\231t mind because I was in love with the man. Okay. In 1981, he arrested for hijacking, not hijacking but buying and selling cars from, from the thieves. So, he was arrested for two years.

So he was in prison?

He was in prison. Yes. So, when he got out, he didnâ\200\231t come here. He went straight to another woman; he was in love with at (inaudible). While, he was there, he decided to take the...he came here, fighting, he squeezed my neck, wanting me to, to...wanted me to give him the title deed because he has already made an arrangement with the Small Development to borrow some money from him. So, it was in the morning. I was getting ready to go to work. He choked me, eventually; I just managed to lift up my hand to say that he must just wait. So I got up from the bed, opened the kist and I gave him the title deed. So then he left to go and give...to take that money and give SBDC the title deed. So, next I hear this house has been taken by this company. I showed another lady at work, I didnâ\200\231t know what to do because, this company wanted to sell the house to somebody who was going to pay them cash. They said that they wanted something like 10 000. I didnâ\200\231t have the money, so, the lady said she was going to speak to the Manager; it was Mr. Lyster then at Trust Bank. She spoke to him about this and Mr. Lyster didnâ\200\231t come back to me for the whole week and this lady kept coming back to me and saying that, did the manager call you, call you yet. I said no, he hasnâ\200\231t said anything. On a Friday, Mr. Lyster, and he said that he wanted to hear the whole story like I am telling you now. So, he said, I mustnâ\200\231t worry, he was going to talk to somebody at the Small Business Development. So, he said, was I going to be working on that particular Saturday. I said, yes, it happened that I am working on Saturday. So, the man from SBDC came to the office here at Trust Bank. So, they called me to come and talk and to tell him everything about my story. So, they said I must come to their office. I wasnâ\200\231t getting paid anything then. It was only 120 rands. So, they arranged for me to...they didnâ\200\231t want to give me the house. So, I arranged with the Manager, how can I afford to pay this money, if this is my salary, so I didnâ\200\231t know whether he begged them or what he promised them, but they came back to me and they said its okay. I must come back to their office and paid...when I went there, they arranged for me to pay 80 rands a month, but then they were hesitant, they said that out of this salary, there is nothing that I can buy, leave alone the house. Okay, so I started paying, that was in 1985, I started paying the Small Development Bank. I paid and paid and paid. Staying that side with the woman, he doesnâ\200\231t even come here. Imagine from 1985. Okay, then I got sick. The legs started getting

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swollen. I think it was just the stress. So, I started complaining, but they didnâ\200\231t chase me at work. I got on with everybody. I was obedient, I did what they wanted me to do. I told them if there was something that I didnâ\200\231t understand or didnâ\200\231t like. So we were altogether with the girls and the Manager and the other people.

What happened thereafter?

Okay, he came back in 19...in 2005.

Your husband?

My husband. I didnâ\200\231t want to open the room for him, our doors, because he was shouting and screaming outside. So, he broke the padlocks from the, both our doors and the gates. I still didnâ\200\231t open. So, he broke this window, in the bedroom window . He jumped in and he came in and he said yes, I am here now. He wanted the title deed. Hah, another one, I said you took the title deed. Now, he is fighting, you must know he is a tall man, he is hefty and I am shivering. I didnâ\200\231t have it with me because it (inaudible) staying with me then. So, he brought some, a few bags of his, brought them. I was staying with my cousin. He threw them inside the bedroom. He threw all my cousinâ\200\231s clothes and he threw them outside the yard. Now, I am going to stay with him. This man has got sores everywhere. They are leaking and they are smelling. So, I was forced to stay with him. I didnâ\200\231t know that he came here to sell the house again. So, he know that I canâ\200\231t walk outside. So, he was standing there, all the time the Postman comes. He collect the post. I was paying my rent, my, my rates, my water, my lights. So, he managed to collect those for three months, he stayed. Took them. Thatâ\200\231s how he managed to sell the house that is still here, he is paying all his accounts. I never saw Mr. Khumalo who bought the house from him. So, they were talking from outside. They can be sitting here, but I wouldnâ\200\231t know who is he talking to. So, I went to...no, in order to come to you (LRC). I went to the Police Station because he was pushing me around. He would bang the door when he goes out at night and he says the door is jammed, wonâ\200\231t you please open this door or I am going to break it down. Now, like I donâ\200\231t walk. I would tell him I am coming to open the door. Now, when I touch the door, he would push the door, and so I would fall. I would crawl, crawl and scream. I said that no, I am sitting here with this man, alone here in the house. I must just go and report this.

You didnâ\200\231t have any children?

No, I didnâ\200\231t get any children. So, thatâ\200\231s how I went to the Police Station for me to meet with Magistrate Myene to report that he is, this man is hitting me. So, they wrote a Protection Order. We went there about three times. And Mr. Myene, told me about Legal Aid Board.

Legal Resources Centre?

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Legal Resources Centre. So, I went to them at V-section, in that branch. So, he didnâ\200\231t stop hitting me, so I went back to the Police Station and Mr. Myene said that he wanted to know which Legal Resources I went to and I so told him. So, he phoned them and told them to take my file and give it to you people.

Oh, right. So, you went to Legal Aid Board and you took it to Legal Resources Centre?

Thatâ\200\231s right. Thatâ\200\231s how I knew your place and there Mr. Myene said that he is going to tell a lady woman to phone me. That was Nomfundo (Gobodo) then. A Xhosa woman. She phoned me. She wanted all the documents. Because I couldnâ\200\231t walk, she sent Sharita (Samuel) I think, not Sharita (Samuel)...

Tracy?

Tracy, thatâ\200\231s right. So, thatâ\200\231s how.

So, now what do you want the Legal Resources to do?

I want them to get my house back to me.

So, where is your husband now?

He died.

Oh really...

He died a year ago. He, the minute he took the money from this man. I mean, he wasnâ\200\231t staying here by the time, they finished talking about selling the house from each other. And he went to make another title deed, I believe. He said he lost it. But I had it here in the house. Okay, where was I now?

So, you were saying how you went to the Legal Resources Centre and Tracy came and the case is now that you want your house back?

I want my house back, yes.

And this is from Mr. Khumalo?

Yes, he transferred the house to Mr. Khumalo. He took the money, if I hear Mr. Khumalo saying so and he left. He left in January and Mr. Khumalo only came in March to tell me that heâ\200\231s already bought the house, so he is ready to come in at t
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end of that March and I must get out. That's when I said how am I going to do this thing now. So, that is about everything.

Right. So, at the moment, the Legal Resources Centre is representing you?

They are yes.

And who do you work with?

Where, at the Legal Resources?

Yes.

Sharita (Samuel)

Okay, so by telephone?

I telephone her. I have never been there. Yes, because...

It is difficult for you to...

Much, much difficult. Because the car costs me 100 rand to come here to go to my pension point, it is just here at Umlazi. And then anyone who is pushing me, it costs me 50 rands. And I have got my brother's children who want bread, who want money for transport, they want this and that. So, I am hoping that Legal Resources Centre could get back my house because my brother's children have got nowhere else. He died and their mother also left them when they were very small, they were about two and one. She went to Swaziland, I think she died that side.

So you are taking care of them?

I am taking care of them.

How old are they now?

The other one is twenty and the other one is nineteen. They are doing very, very well at school.

Oh, thatâ\200\231s nice...

They are at DUT, second year now.

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Gladys, I hope the Legal Resources Centre is able to help you.

God, Please God ,they must help me. I have got nowhere else to go.

Thank you very much for taking the time and seeing us and being interviewed.

Thatâ\200\231 my pleasure. I am only glad to help you here.

Thank you

Thank you.

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