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## **INTERVIEW WITH BRAMAGE EDMOND SEKETE**

**Dale McKinley (DM):** Please state your full name just for the record thanks?

**Bramage Edmond Sekete (BES):** My full name is Bramage Edmond Sekete.

**DM:** Bramage how long have you been in Rammolutsi?

**BES:** Since 1982.

**DM:** 1982? And before that time, where did you stay?

**BES:** Actually I was born in a farm. The farm that I was born at is called Straismore. It is about 10 kilometres away from Rammolutsi and the way to Vreedefort and Potchefstroom. It is where I was born and grew up.

**DM:** And your parents were working on this farm?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** And before then, what about your grand parents?

**BES:** Also on the farm.

**DM:** So it was quite a long generation of people living on the farm? Tell us a little bit of growing up on the farm?

**BES:** For me by that time it was so nice because we didn't have any problems. Like, my parents when they were working on the farm, they were getting mealie meal, milk and many other things that they were getting from the white people they were working for. The problem was that there were no shops around the farm like when they want something from the shop they will send us to town to buy things like the groceries.

**DM:** In terms of your living conditions?

**BES:** The living conditions wasn't so bad because we were not used to buy things like the mealie-meal and milk, so my parents get 80kg mealie meal from the white farmer and everyday we used to get milk in the morning and afternoon ... fresh milk from the cows. My father used to milk for the farmer - there was no dairy but he was just milking for the white farmer's family, so the remaining milk he used to give it to my parents.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** And what about the house that you were staying?

**BES:** The house that was the problem because we didn't have our own house at the farm. We used to dig holes and made bricks from the ground and after that we would build houses. And water, we were fetching water from the river before but when time goes on he put the engine - there was a borehole so the borehole was pulling water out from the underground. He had two tanks from where we were staying and then he put taps into our houses.

**AV:** When was that?

**BES:** It started in 1980.

**AV:** Did you go to the school on the farm as well?

**BES:** Yes.

**AV:** Tell me about the school at the farm.

**BES:** The school at the farm was good. The school used to have two teachers, there was the principal and the teacher - so both of them were teaching. The principal used to teach from standard two up to standard 4 and the other teacher used to teach from sub A up to standard 1 ... but there wasn't this thing of periods.

**AV:** So they didn't have any high school?

**BES:** No, we didn't have any high school.

**AV:** Did you go to high school?

**BES:** No.

**DM:** What are some of your memories of that early childhood on the farm? Just tell us some of the things that you used to do ... what do you remember most of all?

**BES:** What I remember clearly when I grew up on the farm we used to play soccer on the farm .. on the weekends. During the week when we come back from school we used to play sometimes ... we used to go to the river and swim and most of us we used to like to swim and when the river was flowing we used to take fencing wires and make something to catch the fish from the river.

**AV:** And that's what you remember. Do you have bad memories about the farm?

**BES:** Not exactly. But the bad thing that I can remember is that we moved out from that farm that I was born and we moved to the other farm it was called Doornkop, on the same way to Potchefstroom. The farm owner he was treating people bad because my parents used to go to work around 5 o'clock in the morning and they were leaving work at around 9 or 10 o'clock in the evening. And, he used to beat up people very bad.

**AV:** Why would he beat them?

**BES:** Like maybe when they did something wrong. He wasn't telling them like look when the tractor is broken ... he used to say you broke my tractor so he beat him up for that broken tractor.

**DM:** So when did you move to that farm? How old were you?

**BES:** It was around 1977.

**DM:** And how old were you at that point?

**BES:** I think I was around 13 or 14.

**DM:** So when you finished standard four you stopped school at that point or did you go on to another school?

**BES:** When I finished standard four I came here at Rammolutsi to attend school - at a school called Mahlabathini. But I just go there for a year.

**DM:** And why did that end at such a short time?

**BES:** Because the white farmer at that time like after school I was going home, I was travelling everyday with a bicycle. So one day when I enter the farm he just met me at the gate and started asking me where do I come from. I told him that I'm coming from the school. He asked me what is my fathers' name and I told him my father's name. Then he was coming from the town side, when he came back to the farm he told my father that I'm big enough to attend school and he told my father that on his farm children attending schooling up until standard one and when they have finished standard one they can not go for standard two because they are enough educated. So, the children must come and start working on the farm. So that was bad treatment that I had from that farmer.

**AV:** So did you have to start to work on the farm?

**BES:** Yes I worked in the farm for a period of almost three months. So, one day the animal doctor came over to the farm and the farm owner told me I must run after the bakkie to open the gate for the animal doctor and I did run. But because the bakkie is too faster than a person who is running when I get to the gate the animal doctor just told me that I can just close the gate for me. When I get back to where we were working the white farmer told me that he was going to beat me up and so forth. Luckily it was towards the end of the month because the next day we were getting our salaries. I just decided that when I get my salary I'm not going to come back to work again. So, what I'm going to do ... I must just leave this place.

**AV:** Where did you go from there?

**BES:** I went to the mines in Steelfontein.

**DM:** How old were you at that point?

**BES:** I was around 16/17.

**DM:** So you went to the mines to look for work?

**BES:** Yes to look for work.

**DM:** And what happened there?

**BES:** I got a job there, because I didn't stay long looking for job. We arrived in Stillfontein on Sunday, late in the afternoon so we slept under the trees. Luckily the following day on Monday around 9 o'clock I saw people running to one of the guys who

was wearing nice clothes ... he had a tie on ... I didn't know what is happening and I was just wondering why are these people running to this man, what is happening. So, I just stand there where I was and this man called me and asked me do you want job and I said yes. He said, do you have your pass and I said no I have a duplicate and he said give it to me. I gave my application form for the ZA by that time to this man, and he started to say, where are your bags and blankets? I said there they are. He said go and fetch them and stand there in front for me. So, I was wondering why is this man taking my application form for the ID because I was still waiting for my ZA. Then I stand there - he had about 100 people - so after he had counted us he said to us come follow me. I didn't even know where we were going I was so shocked but I just followed this man. Then he got into the hostels he said we must sit somewhere and they will call us one by one. They started calling me again, then I went into the office and when I get into the office there was some forms and I was wondering what is happening here. They were filling in and asking me questions ... where is your parents and where do you live and so forth. So I just told them that I'm living on the farms around Viljoenskroon. They wanted the name of the farm and my parents. So we did all those things and then he said to me just sign here and I signed. After signing he said to me go to the next office. I went to the next office up until we come to the end. So when it comes to an end, we were sitting in the hall and I was wondering where are we going now, what are these people going to do to us? Some of the guys that I knew when we were living together in the farm, they came and looked after me and they said hey man when we are here we must all know that you got the job. I was so happy by that time.

**AV:** Tell us about the work that you were doing there?

**BES:** I used to work underground. The job that I was doing was that we were digging gold. I don't know how to call it but in the mine language when we were cleaning, you said you were doing 'supering', because we were using water and spades.

**AV:** How did you find that work?

**BES:** It was difficult for me.

**AV:** Why?

**BES:** I wasn't used to working under the ground and I was thinking that the mine can just now fall on top of us and kill us.

**DM:** How long did you work there?

**BES:** I worked at the mine for seven years.

**AV:** So from what year to what year?

**BES:** From 1978 to 1984.

**DM:** How much did you get paid during that time for this work?

**BES:** During that time I used to get R3.95 a day per eight hours. After the deduction at month end, I was earning like R390 something.

**AV:** What company was it?

**BES:** Steelfontein Gold Mine.

**AV:** At the time were the unions and so forth starting to organise in those mines?

**BES:** Ja, because the people who started to work at the mine before I worked at the mine, they told me that the unions started earlier, around 1978, because I got the job around late October 1978.

**DM:** That was the National Union of Mineworkers ... did you join?

**BES:** Yes I did.

**DM:** How would you describe the relations between the workers and the management at the mine?

**BES:** It was good even though we were going to strikes. When we go to strikes we as the South Africans ... the people who were coming like from Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi ... they told us that we were *pantsulas*. So, before we went to the strikes they were chasing us away so that we must come home.

**AV:** The relations between the South Africans and the other people weren't good?

**BES:** It was good but they said we must just go home because we can't face the white people as South Africans, so they don't want us to be in danger. That is why they said to us we must always come home. But when time goes on we decided on our own that we can't run away, the other people they are going to strike, so we must strike together with these people so that we can show them that they are our brothers even though they are from other countries. As the Africans we must be together.

**AV:** So when you say they said that you were *pantsulas*, explain what you mean?

**BES:** Like we wearing trousers. So our trousers were shorter like here on the leg they were a bit small.

**AV:** Explain to us what the word *pantsula* implies?

**BES:** The word *pantsula* means *tsotsis* and dancers.

**AV:** And were you a *pantsula*?

**BES:** No I wasn't a *pantsula*. But some of us were *pantsulas*.

**AV:** Did you dress that style?

**BES:** No.

**DM:** At the time that you were working at the mines were your parents still on the farm ... or had they left?

**BES:** Yes by that time when I was working on the mines my parents used to stay on the same farm called Doornkop.

**DM:** Were you supporting the (with) the money that you were earning?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** It was going to support the family?

**BES:** Yes I used to go and give it to my mom ...by that time she was still alive.

**AV:** How often were you able to go and visit your mom?

**BES:** Twice a month.

**AV:** At the time the kind of movement of people was restricted by the pass books and so forth. How it was easy for you to move around?

**BES:** It wasn't easy man ... like when I leave from the mine maybe the weekend I'm off, I'm going home. When I get here in town, Viljoenskroon town, I must go to the office and maybe make a request for a special so that I can be able to be with my parents for the weekend. Like maybe I'm coming on Friday, so from Friday night, Saturday the whole day, Saturday the whole night, Sunday I must state around what time would I leave from the farm to go to the bus stop. So if it's like around three o'clock I must state it clear that three o'clock I will be leaving home to the bus stop and by four o'clock I will be at the bus stop and waiting for the bus.

**AV:** In terms of your pass, where did it say you're living, where did it say you were a citizen of?

**BES:** I'm a farm citizen, South African farm citizen.

**DM:** You worked at the mine until 1984, why did you leave? What was the reason for leaving the mine?

**BES:** We were retrenched by that time and the mine also starting to put into the mines the contracts. So I decided that the money that I was earning from the mine was much better than the money from the contracts, because the contract people they didn't give us bonuses, they didn't pull out the money of UIF. So when I'm earning R400 a month, it is just like that, R400. At the end of the year I have got nothing. When I'm going for my leave at the mine they used to give us two months leave and then after two months - or if I feel that I can go back to the work before two months I can do that. The contract, they were just giving us a week leave and after that you must just go back without any money. So I was used to the mine system like when I'm going to the leave I have got my leave pay and my monthly salary and when I come back from the leave I'm going to get maybe R150 for coming back to work so that I can maintain myself from when I started up until the month end.

**DM:** So you were retrenched in 1984? Then what did you do?

**BES:** Yes. From there when I was retrenched, I went to Potchefstroom to seek for a job - so I got a security job.

**DM:** For a private security firm?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** How long were you working there with them?

**BES:** From 1985 until 1990.

**DM:** So you were in Potchefstroom for 5 years?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit about life in Potchefstroom at that point, in terms of where you were living; what you were making, your family. Were you still a single man at that point?

**BES:** Yes I was a single man. At that point my parents were still living on the farm but we as kids, we were living here at the townships at the backyards of the other people; like at my mom's granny - we were living at her backyard.

**AV:** At that time, did you experience any trouble with the white people in the town?

**BES:** Yeah, like the guy who was the supervisor at the security. When he speaks to us he was telling us that we are the black power and so forth and if we think we can take over in the country we will do everything that we want ... but we were not going to do anything. So we were just saying guys look, as long as we work we don't mind about this guy, he can say whatever he want to say.

**DM:** That was the time from 1985- 90 that the country was very much in a lot of conflict, there was a lot of things going on. What was happening there? Did you get involved?

**BES:** Yes in Potchefstroom when I first get there I used to stay in a hostel , maybe for five month. Then I moved out from the hostel and went to stay with my uncle and it was nice for me. Then one day when we came back from work we see there is something wrong in the township but we don't know what is happening in the township by that time. So when we come to the place called 'Gate' - when you are coming into Ikageng - there are offices of the local government. Some of the municipality securities told us that it is bad in the location and you people can't go there. But we said we have to go home - where will we sleep if we don't go home. They said you must know that tonight you people are going to die. We said no, we can die as long as we are at home. So we went home. When we went there we heard that Inkatha was there at the hostel and they are going to attack the people who are living in the township. So that night we didn't sleep and the youngest ones came to collect us - they were screaming around the street while seeking support. My uncle said to me don't go there and I said to my uncle, I have to go there and give the support because these people will come over to the township and attack people while people are sleeping. they maybe going to kill us sleeping. So it's better we must be there and we must see what is happening. If they kill us there it is fine, you people must appreciate it. He said to me why do you people want to go there? And I said to him, no uncle this is our country and when things are happening like this we have to fight for our country. Then we went there.

**DM:** At that point where you politically active? Were you supportive of the ANC, because you mentioned Inkatha attacking. So was the township ANC dominated or it was just a community issue?

**BES:** At that time I was not so much involved in politics, I was just active. I was just a follower of ANC. But around the township, there were so many political parties like PAC, SACP and the ANC itself. So what was happening by that time was that most of the people, we were following the ANC.

**DM:** What happened that night when Inkatha was supposed to attack?

**BES:** That night we didn't sleep. There was a big fence between the hostel and the township itself. The Inkatha members, as we are told, they were inside the hostel and some of the people who were living permanently at the hostel ran away into the townships also. So that night we didn't sleep. The following day, early in the morning one of the cops came in the township with the Hippos and with the loud hailer, and he said to the community, 'do you want to fight with these people'. The community said yes because we don't know what they want from us. He screamed again to those who are in the hostels and said, 'do you want to fight with these people' and they said yes we want to fight. So the cops moved away with their Hippos. We managed to push the fencing down and we were throwing the stones to the hostels and throwing the petrol bombs into the hostels. We didn't know if there was anybody or what but by that day the hostel was burnt.

**DM:** After that was there any more conflict or was it the end of it in Ikageng?

**BES:** The following day we didn't go to work we said we are moving out from here to Kanana. We were singing the song called "we are toyi-toying to Kanana" by that day we were singing that song. People who were living in the backyard of other people or renting from other people, we moved them out to that Kanana, which was an informal settlement ... there was no water, there was no lights there, there was nothing there.

**AV:** Why were you moving the people out to Kanana?

**BES:** Because we said it was enough that people must rent from those who have their own places. People can't get their own places because they were renting from those who have their own place.

**AV:** Was the government trying to prevent the people from moving into the informal settlement?

**BES:** No they didn't do anything by that time.

**DM:** So you lived in Potchefstroom until 1990. Then what happened after that?

**BES:** In 1990 I moved out, I left the security job. I got a job at the Indian shop, same place in Potchefstroom.

**DM:** What kind of shop? What were you doing?

**BES:** It was a furniture shop. I was driving up and down with the driver because we were delivering and I was collecting the money from the people who didn't pay, who said no, I will pay when my fridge is there at my place. So they used to call it COD - cash on delivery - I used to collect that money.

**AV:** How did you find working there for the Indian people?

**BES:** It was so nice. It was the first time I worked at the shop and I was earning around R180 a week. To me, it was useful because things were not so expensive like now.

**DM:** You were living at that time at the informal settlement or you were living at the backyard?

**BES:** No by that time I was living with my uncle. I didn't move to the informal settlement.

**AV:** How long did you work at the shop?

**BES:** I left the shop in 1995.

**AV:** So you were there during the elections?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit of what it was like during that period - 1990s - in terms of the political changes?

**BES:** Around 1990s, we were really nervous because we were happy that we were going to make our first mark but we didn't know when are we going to make our first mark. After Mandela came out from jail we are hearing from the radio that they are busy organising for the year 1994 so that we can make our first mark in South Africa so we can have our first black president. We were so happy and excited you see. There were no longer toyi toying ... we were happy.

**AV:** Did you see any change in terms of how the white community was reacting to the elections?

**BES:** What I remember one day is that I was at a shop. The white man came from the farm came to buy two big fridges and two fridges ... So, when I was chatting with him he told me that guys do you see what is going to happen after 1994. When I responded I said it is going to be nice because we will be in freedom. He said guys your people are going to be in shit and I said why? He said no let's just watch it. He left and we end up like that. When I'm going to deliver on his farm he repeated the same words again - he said guys be careful, your people are going to suffer. I said no man it will be fine. Then we just put things in his house and we go back. I was a bit worried after he said those words to me because I did not know what he means and I was worried and worried. But truly speaking, after 1994 we were happy saying that we have got our own president and we made our mark and so forth. But I started to say that hey, what that Mr. Botha was saying to me that we are going to suffer, it's true because now people were getting retrenched worse, even the big Potchefstroom company named Kynoch, it has retrenched a lot of people. So, 1995 I became sick. So I said that while I'm sick I can't work anymore, let me go back home. My uncle didn't want me to come back. I'd rather go and die at home and he said, no man you won't die, what you have to do is just follow the instructions that you are getting from your ancestors. I said uncle, I have to go home, like it or not and he said to me, okay go. I went to the shop and said guys thank you for giving me the job for such a long time, you were so good to me but I can't do nothing, I am sick and I have to go back home.

**DM:** What kind of sickness? What were you sick with?

**BES:** My ancestors started to consult me so I couldn't do anything. By that time I didn't understand that it is my ancestors that are trying to talk to me, I didn't hear what do they

want from me. So when I get here at home, my sister took me to one of the prophets who was also a sangoma. The sangoma told me that, no this man does not need to work any longer. What he needs to do is to listen to his ancestors.

**DM:** What were you suffering from when you say you were sick ... what kind of sickness was it?

**BES:** I was just swelling and I couldn't even walk, I could walk for 30 minutes. I was becoming very tired, so I must sit next to the road and so forth.

**DM:** Did you go to any doctor to tell you what was wrong or did anybody else say, this was what is wrong with you?

**BES:** I went to a medical doctor once. When I get there he said to me, I don't see any thing wrong. When I get here with my sister she said let's go to one of the prophets or the traditional healer.

**DM:** When you say you were with your sister, was that back at the farm or here in Rammolutsi?

**BES:** It was here at Rammolutsi.

**DM:** So by that stage had your parents passed on?

**BES:** Yes my parents had passed away.

**AV:** And your family was staying here at Rammolutsi?

**BES:** I am the first person to come and stay here at Rammolutsi. So after my parents passed away, I went to collect them all, so we can all stay together.

**AV:** This was in 1995?

**BES:** No 1992, when I collected them from the farm.

**AV:** So you were still working at the shop when you moved to Rammolutsi?

**BES:** Yes.

**AV:** And when you moved here, where did you stay?

**BES:** To this side, to the informal settlement

**AV:** So you built the mukhukhu here?

**BES:** Yes.

**AV:** So when you moved here in 1995 you were still staying in the mukhukhu?

**BES:** Yes. Because 1996, we were taking this place by force. It was a farm here so we took this place by force.

**AV:** When you say your ancestors were trying to communicate with you. Did you then start to listen to them speak ...?

**BES:** After we went to the prophet/traditional healer he explained to me that I must listen carefully, and I would hear some words saying do this, do that and go to a certain place.

But before I couldn't hear, but I just heard that someone was talking to me but I couldn't hear what he was saying to me.

**AV:** What were your ancestors saying to you?

**BES:** They were sending me one of the ladies around Rammolutsi. They were saying to me I must go to Mamoya's place and when I get there I must tell her that they said she must help me. So, she knew what she must do to me and but if she does something wrong I will also see that no, this is wrong.

**AV:** What happened from there?

**BES:** One day, it was during the day. I had taken my medication and I felt like sleeping, so I take my blanket and put it down on the floor and I just slept. I had hardly slept more than 15 minutes and when I woke up I told my elder sister that I must go to Mamoya's place and I must speed up. My sister said Mamoya is not there but I said no I must go there, if she is not there I will wait for her. So when I got there, truly speaking she was not there. I waited hardly for 10 minutes and she was coming in hurry and she said to her kids, is there anybody who has come to see me and they said yes, there is one of the fathers here is waiting. She said its fine, she knew about me. I told her that my granny, my father's mum, said I must come to her so that she can help me. But I didn't tell her the whole story. She said to me yes, I knew. I have been waiting for you for long time - you just wasted your time.

**AV:** And then?

**BES:** Afterwards we started doing like ... when I was sleeping I started dreaming and do this, do that and I was telling her. And she was following the instructions as I'm telling her. She said you must take me to the river maybe for example, and on such a day we will going to the river, to that place.

**AV:** What path did they set out for you? What was the path that your ancestors were telling you to follow?

**BES:** Before they used to show me that I must look after other people, if somebody has problems I must help try to help them. But I didn't know how to help them. One day another lady brought a baby - that day I was at Mamoya's place - and then I told Mamoya that there is someone who coming with an ill child. I was told I must give her .. I must boil an African potato - and I gave that child a spade (?) with the African potato. When the child is still small and still drinking from her mom, that milk doesn't come out at all, so when you spade that milk is going to come out. So we did that. After a week her mom brought the baby back and the baby was fine. Mamoya asked the lady since you brought you baby how does she doing? ... and from that day up until now I don't have problem.

**AV:** Ok and that is how you became a traditional healer?

**BES:** Yes that is how I became a traditional healer.

**AV:** I just want to get back now to what you were saying that when you came here, this was still a farm and you took it by force. Explain to me the context there?

**BES:** One day if I remember clearly it was on Sunday. We had a meeting in the other section, there were some informal settlements at that side. When we are at the meeting we decided that there is a land here and nothing is happening and they are not doing anything. We heard that the previous municipality has bought this place and here are pens, here are some sites. So we just decided that let's go and take some spades and let's go and clean that place up and people must start moving in there.

**AV:** When you said you took it by force was anyone trying to prevent you from taking land?

**BES:** Yes the previous local government was trying to prevent us from taking the place but we took it by force. We told them that we don't have money - that R2500 that you demand from us we don't have, so we can't buy those sites. We are just going to stay there because we don't have money.

**AV:** Have they already marked out sites as plots?

**BES:** Yes.

**AV:** And they were asking, you said R2500?

**BES:** Between R2000 and R2500.

**DM:** When you came back here to Rammolutsi in 1995 from your job in Potchefstroom how many members of your family were you living with here?

**BES:** We were around eight.

**DM:** That is your brothers, sisters and children ...?

**BES:** Yes it was my sister, myself, my brother and my younger brother and my brother's three kids.

**DM:** So when you built the mukhukhu in the informal settlement, all of you stayed there?

**BES:** Yes, all of us.

**DM:** In the informal settlement, did you have any services there at that point?

**BES:** No, we didn't have any services. They put one communal tap at the AKs so it's where we were fetching water.

**DM:** And that communal tap was serving how many households?

**BES:** Around 100.

**DM:** I just want to ask you something a bit more personal ...Up until this time now, by 1995 you were ... still a single man?

**BES:** No, I used to stay with my wife and then we separate.

**DM:** When did you get married?

**BES:** 1996.

**DM:** Up until that point - because generally in at least most of the communities probably with most of your friends, at that stage they have long been married and had families - for you why was it only in 1996 because you were already 'on' by that time?

**BES:** The reason is that ... by that time me and my wife we got one baby girl - her name is Mathapelo. She was living with her mum and I was afraid that if I can leave her with her mom alone in the house maybe these *tsotsis* can maybe attack the old lady in the house, so I was afraid of that. But in 1995 her elder brother came back from Vereeniging, he used to work there. So 1996 I decided that we must come and stay together.

**DM:** What was it like? You had been working since you were 16 years old, you had different kinds of jobs all through those years, you had earned your own living. You come back to Rammolutsi, you're now becoming a traditional healer and you are not working. How did that transition for you, how did that feel? At the time in your life when more people are trying to get more jobs and better paying and things like that ...?

**BES:** It was very difficult for me. Even now a traditional job is not like working because when you follow instructions of the traditional healing, we are not getting many customers. Like the person comes once ... let me make an example ... I say I'm going to charge you R300 for the service I'm going to give you ...it is for the whole year.

**DM:** What kind of ... I'm sorry I don't know what the right word is ... but what kind of services do you offer as a traditional healer? What do you do for people?

**BES:** What we do is that we give them medications and they come and take some baths and we steam them, but it is not all of those who need to be steamed.

**DM:** So, mostly it is the dispensing of medication. Do you at all counsel people? Do you tell them about the future, about what's going to happen in their lives and what they must do ... these kinds of the things?

**BES:** Some of the people we are counselling and tell them that if you need to do some traditional events ... we tell them that your parents used to do this and you don't do this any more ... this is going to give you problems so you need to do some of the traditional events one day or once a year.

**AV:** What kinds of illnesses do you treat?

**BES:** Like bad luck, if a person has got drop, if he is swelling up and many others.

**AV:** What about HIV?

**BES:** Myself, I didn't had any HIV positive patient, So, I don't want to lie and say I can treat HIV and AIDS.

**AV:** But you treat drop ... and how would you treat drop for instance?

**BES:** There is a medication for drop ... we boil it and give it to the person to drink half a glass three times a day in the morning, afternoon and evening.

**AV:** Do you advise people also in terms of sexual practices if they come with drop?

**BES:** Yes we do.

**AV:** What would you tell them for instance?

**BES:** What I always used to say especially boys ... I say guys you don't want to trouble with girls. If you've got one girlfriend be fair and honest with the girlfriend because if you have maybe five girlfriends you don't know where you got the drop. Tomorrow you will say this girl has dropped me and you find that unfortunately it is not her and it is the one that you liked more than the other. So please try to be honest to your girlfriend. Try to have one girlfriend and that's it..

**DM:** After you went to consult the initial traditional healer and she told you these things ... from that point did you go through any official training, did you have any courses or was it just that you became a traditional healer through that

**BES:** No what has happened is that she trained me. I didn't go to another courses and I don't want to lie also

**DM:** Are you part of any association as a traditional healer?

**BES:** Yes, I did want to join one of the traditional healers association around here in Rammolutsi. But the problem is that one day they showed me their certificates. I was regretting because I saw that their certificates doesn't have the registration number. I told some of the members of the traditional healers that these certificates can put us in trouble because their certificates don't have registration number and I'm afraid of that.

**AV:** Are you registered yourself, as a traditional healer?

**BES:** Not yet, because the organisation that I wanted to join is the one that I'm saying that their certificates does not have the registration numbers, so I'm afraid of that.

**DM:** Since 1996, is this pretty what you have done trying to earn a living - being a traditional healer? Or are there some other things?

**BES:** Sometimes I'm doing some piece jobs like on the farms and in town itself. IN town I'm maybe doing gardening and earning maybe between R30 – R50.

**DM:** Have you ever thought about going and getting another job. like a salaried job?

**BES:** Yes I am willing to get another job if I can get it. But, when I look at my age it gives me a problem because our ruling party has limited the age of workers. Like when you are 35 years you still have got an opportunity to get a job, but after you are reaching 36 you are regretting. Because you have got two chances you can get the job or not,because you became older now.

**DM:** And how old are you now Sekete?

**BES:** I'm around 45.

**DM:** Now I'm just going to ask you about the community in the last ten years in particular since you've moved here permanently ... When you forcefully took this stand, and built the mukhukhu, how did the municipality respond to that after you had done it?

**BES:** By that time when we took over here by force, they didn't say anything. Some of the ANC members encouraged us to take these places. We are not able to buy this place because Africa's land is a land that belongs to the Africans, it doesn't belong to the

capitalists. So, it's how we took over this place. But a few years later, after we voted for the ward councillors before this demarcation thing ... they started saying that we must pay and by that time,. Most of us were not working. So, we told them straight that we don't have money to pay and they must remember what the ANC has said before - that this is the land for the Africans and the Africans don't have money to pay.

**DM:** What did they want you to pay for? Rental of the spaces, the plots?

**BES:** They wanted us to pay for the rentals and even for the plots.

**DM:** How did they respond in terms of ... when you took over this place there were obviously no services ... so what happened in regards of the services?

**BES:** We stayed here for almost two years without water in our yards. We still collected water from the same communal tap. Later, they started to install the poles for the electricity and the others were digging for the water meters. But some of our people - we have got big holes in our yards where we were getting water from ...

**AV:** Like boreholes?

**BES:** No it's not boreholes, we just dig those holes because here in Rammolutsi you can take a spade ...the water will start coming out from the ground.

**DM:** So that is what you were doing in the first two years?

**BES:** Some of us were using the water from the tap and some of us were using that water from the holes.

**DM:** So they started bringing in electricity in the late 1990s

**BES:** Yes.

**AV:** Do you remember what year was it?

**BES:** Around 1997.

**DM:** We understand that when they began to hook people up – in the makhukhus – it was with the prepaid meters right?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** What did you think about that? Was that the first time you had heard about the prepaid?

**BES:** To be honest, when we start using electricity we were happy because we as black people, we grew up using candles, paraffin and for lighting and for cooking we were using coal, wood ... so when we started getting electricity we thought it was going to be easier for us and at that time we were getting cheap electricity from ESKOM, it was R5. R5 units - when you are not using a fridge, the two plates, the iron and even an electricity kettle - I used to buy R5 electricity and I spend it maybe for three months and in the mid fourth month I must go buy another. So the units were sufficient by that time and for now when they increase the money from R5 to R10, then the units became below. Like when I buy R10 electricity units today, I'm going to use it ... today is Wednesday ... by next week Monday and possibly I must go and buy another electricity. So it's clear that when

ESKOM can be busy with the transformers something is going to happen at the units and they start running faster than before.

**AV:** They installed water meters as well when they put in taps in the yards?

**BES:** Yes it is water meters but not pre paid water meters.

**AV:** So they charging for water as well?

**BES:** Yes, they are charging for water.

**AV:** Are people in Rammolutsi paying?

**BES:** For the sake of the job losses, most of the people in Rammolutsi are not working. Those who are paying are the individuals actually, like the pensioners and a few of those who are government servants, a few of them, and those who are working at Central Wes.

**AV:** If you don't pay ... like with electricity you get cut off if you don't pay because it's pre-paid ... but with water have they ever cut off people who haven't paid?

**BES:** Yes they did. But we stood up and tell them that you people said water is life and you people promised you are going to give us 6000 kilolitres (*should be saying 6000 litres*), so we don't know how much is that 6000 kilolitres of water. You can't just ... if people don't have money to pay ... send your workers to go and shut down the tap for the poor people.

**DM:** When you say 'we', who is 'we'?

**BES:** I'm talking about the Rammolutsi Ratammoho Crisis Committee, which is the RRMCC and some of the community members and other organisations which is called *Kemedi ya Baagi*.

**DM:** Which means?

**BES:** *Kemedi ya Baagi* it means standing for the people who are living in Rammolutsi.

**DM:** Just tell us a little bit about how did this RRMCC come to be formed and why?

**BES:** What has made the RRMCC to be formed was around service deliveries, the rate of crime and awareness of prepaid water meters.

**DM:** Are they threatening to install prepaid water meters?

**BES:** The intention of the Town Council or our Free State Provincial government is to install the prepaid water meters.

**DM:** That is what they have told you?

**BES:** That is what they were aiming to do that and we told them that we don't want prepaid water meters because you people promised that water was life and without water you can't do anything.

**DM:** When was the RMCC established? When did it come together?

**BES:** In 2004 we had our first meeting as a community. Luckily, I met the comrades from APF ... So, one day I spoke to comrade Nina Benjamin about establishing the

organisation around Rammolutsi. Comrade Nina used to work at Khayna College, they did us the favour by giving us some pamphlets and giving us some transport money from Sebokeng to Vilojoenskroon. (*interruption*) ...

**DM:** Okay, we're back on. You were just talking about the establishment of the RMCC

**BES:** After they gave us the transport money, we travelled from Sebokeng to Rammolutsi. It was myself, Mzamo and Tshepo - we were three - when we get here it was on Saturday but our mission was to hold our first meeting the following weekend. So we distributed the pamphlets around the entire Rammolutsi. The meeting was hosted at the place called Lejweng when you just enter Rammolutsi there are two big stones and next to those stones there is an open space – on that open space there is a Vodacom container we hosted our first meeting there. There was no name, there was nothing. The community themselves decided that it was important to launch the organisation and the organisation was launched the following weekend. In other words, we had two meetings in a row - I can't just remember the dates. On the first meeting they decided the name - which is the RRMCC - and then the following weekend the organisation was launched. It's when the RMCC started.

**DM:** Did you receive quite a lot of community support and did many people join the organisation?

**BES:** Yes we used to get a lot of people who are joining us and others were not joining us but were supporting our struggles. When time goes on, the councillors that we had voted for them, they started intimidating people by saying Bramage has opened his own political party and you people are going to be arrested and so forth.

**DM:** So I'm assuming that has affected the organisation and the peoples support for it?

**BES:** Yeah. After the councillor said the people are going to be arrested and Bramage has opened his political party ... they – as the ruling party - called mass meetings. So we attended the mass meetings because some of the people came to us and said Bramage these people are talking about your name wherever they go and they say you are opening a political party. I stated clear to the community that this is not a political party it is a community based organisation, we are here to fight for the rights of the poor communities and we are here to fight the crime which is taking place in our townships, we are here to fight with the councillors, those who are corrupt.

**DM:** How would you describe the work of the RMCC in terms of success in struggling for those things you are talking about?

**BES:** To be fair and honest I can say we have got some difficulties, there and there. But what we have done as the RRMCC - there were some youth here in Rammolutsi, those who did not have money to pay school fees, those who didn't have the parents, their parents have passed away - but we don't know what was the problem. So, one day we managed to take them back to the schools because we went to the schools and told the principals that the kids, they've got a right to education even though they don't have money ... those kids don't have parents, so where must they get money for school fees. What we knew is that the government is subsidising that kind of kids, so what are they doing with that money themselves as the SGBs (Student Governing Bodies) and

principals and school teachers, what are they doing with that subsidy money if they don't give it to those kids who don't have parents. So the kids were accepted back to the schools.

**DM:** In terms of the living situation, the service delivery issues ... how have things been in the last five or six years since you have started organising. Have you had any success in affecting any kind of changes, positively?

**BES:** Not so much. What I can say is that these people, when we started this RRMCC, they were building houses for their own friends, own girlfriends, own relatives. I can say clearly that here was this thing called 'favouritisms' around Rammolutsi, and 'carrying cardisms', like the carrying card members. They were the ones who were mostly recognised, rather than people who applied for their own RDP houses.

**DM:** Have you applied for the RDP houses?

**BES:** Yes we did that..

**DM:** What year was that?

**BES:** Since 1995 we've been applying for the RDP houses. Every time when they call people to go and apply for the RPD house - my brother used to go and apply for the RDP house but even now they are not here, he and his wife they went to the office because yesterday they have got a letter, which was on 31<sup>st</sup> July, they got a letter from the Rammolutsi Council offices, so that today they must start going there.

**DM:** Do you feel as though that because of your activities, the things that you have been involved in, in the community ... Do you feel that that has hurt your opportunities to get an RDP house or any other delivery?

**BES:** Yes I do. What makes me say that I have been hurt my opportunity to get an RDP house, is that even now I'm not sure that my brother is going to get the RDP house as they have sent him a special letter with our house number so that they can go there. I'm not sure that the application will be approved, because what I know is taking place in Rammolutsi is favouritisms.

**DM:** You are still now in this mukhukhu that you are living in now, there are still eight of you in here? How many people are living in here?

**BES:** All of us are still living in here. But my sister and my younger brother ... my younger brother is working around Magaliesburg and my elder sister is working in Vanderbylpark, but month-end they come home here.

**DM:** So the whole family is still living here besides those two?

**BES:** Yes.

**DM:** Is anybody in your family working other than the two that you have mentioned?

**BES:** No. My other brother is also doing piece jobs.

**DM:** Have you found it difficult in the last few years, given the lack of jobs ... have you found it difficult to support your family?

**BES:** Yes, it is very, very difficult. Like if my sister or my younger brother don't come home at month-end - they are going to come maybe at the end of August - we are going to struggle for maybe two months.

**DM:** How much would you estimate that you and your family here living in the mukhukhu, live off of every month?

**BES:** How much money?

**DM:** Do you live off of? In other words if you could say if you have a job, you could say I'm earning R500 a month. But now, what is the income coming into the household here to support everybody, every month?

**BES:** From myself and my brother?

**DM:** Yes from all the family, for everyone?

**BES:** Its R200 for the young one and maybe another R200 for the piece jobs.

**DM:** So you say it is about R400 per month. And the small one, it is for a child support grant?

**BES:** Yes, it's a child support grant for R200. So, me and my brother it is R200, because sometimes you find that I have got one piece job for R50, twice a month. So, it is only R100 and he also earns R50 twice a month.

**DM:** Sekete, we are coming to the latter part the interview, just a few other more general questions. You've been a worker, a traditional healer, you've been a community activist and you've lived in this community for a long time. What do you see as the future for this community in the next while, in Rammolutsi? And also maybe if when you talk about Rammolutsi, you can say about the larger picture as well, the country.

**BES:** What I can say is that I don't see any future as long as the ruling party is still ruling. Because these people are preaching socialism but practically there is no socialism, it is strictly capitalism. What makes me say that it is strictly capitalism, is that they are capitalising on poor people, those who don't have anything, those who don't own anything. But those who are earning, they demand from the poor people and they are enriching themselves, rather than, as they say the 'black economic empowerment', they are not empowering the poor people they are empowering those who are rich. So that's why I'm saying that I don't see no future as long as they are still ruling.

**DM:** And that is you are saying generally?

**BES:** Yes generally and broader also.

**DM:** And lastly ... what is it that you might have to say, not just to us but to everyone that might be watching, that we have not covered here? Is there anything that you want to say?

**BES:** What I would like to say is that let's stop promising people empty promises. If you promise people you must fulfil our promises. And, we must stop capitalising on the poor people, especially those who are voting for the political parties. In South Africa here there is no socialism, especially to those who are in power. They must stop lying to us by saying this is a social economic what, but at the end of the day there is no such thing.

They must stop running to the media and lie in our names, because they are doing things on their own but when they go to the media they are lying in our names saying we have agreed on this and that, and there is no such a thing. They must stop with immediate effect. Thank you.

**MINUTES: 86:43**