

Project name: Alternative History Project
Date of interview: 2007-09-10
Location of interview: Sebokeng, Gauteng
Language of interview: English
Name of Interviewer/s: Dale McKinley & Ahmed Veriava
Name of Interviewee/s: Maria Mabeko Nkomo
Name of transcriber: Moses Moremi
Audio file name: AHP_SEB_NkomoMariaMabeko_20070910

INTERVIEW WITH MARIA MABEKO NKOMO.

Dale Mckinley (DM): First of all let me say thank you very much for giving of your time and for agreeing to talk with us. Just for the record if you can just state your full name, please?

Maria Nkomo (MN): My name is Dr. Maria Nkomo. I am an herbalist staying at 747 Extension 2, Residentia.

DM: The first part of our interview we are just going to ask about your own growing up and life and then we'll get into the more contemporary period. Where were you born? Here in this community or elsewhere?

MN: Ja, here in this community, at Residentia.

DM: At Residentia?

MN: Yes.

DM: So you were born and bred right here, you have lived here all your life?

MN: Yes.

DM: What year were you born?

MN: Which year?

DM: Ja what year were you born?

MN: I was born in 1968.

DM: 1968?

MN: Yes.

DM: Are you married, do you have children?

MN: Ja, I was married but now I'm divorced.

DM: Divorced?

MN: Ja, and I have four children.

DM: Do they stay with you or are they grown up now?

MN: They stay with me.

DM: They are all staying with you?

MN: Yes.

DM: And you live close by here where you work?

MN: Yes, I'm staying closer to where I'm working.

DM: We are trying to do more of a conversation you know, so feel free to say what you need to say. Tell us a little bit more about what it was like growing up in this community in the 1970s as a young girl?

MN: I can't say so much because I wasn't used to go around, but I have noticed so many things.

DM: Tell us about some of those?

MN: Eish first of them is that if you want to be educated you must study hard and put your mind and everything to your studies so that you can achieve what you need to be and achieve your goals. And you must be activated also, to the sports ... so many things like most of the girls. Some of the girls they don't participate like in generally there are some ... I can say they are some homes which they are different, because of poverty. So, other children, they cannot survive to achieve their goals because of poverty. That is what I did experience as a young girl when I was growing.

DM: Your family ... what did you parents do?

MN: My father was a policeman and my mother, she was self-employment, she was selling.

DM: Selling small things?

MN: Ja, like food

DM: Okay. So, when you were growing up did you have the basics, did you have enough I ...?

MN: I did have enough, but when my mother died I was twelve, and then my father did marry again and then that's where life started to confuse me because then there were so many complications. Then I got married at the age of fifteen years. And then I finished school while I was married.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): Why did you get married so young?

MN: Because, that stepmother, she wanted my father to leave us at home, to stay with her to her house. I was with my brother, so we think we must find a job and help ourself at that house. So life was not so right for us. I met the other guy and he promised me to marry me and that's when I married. Because I didn't experience so many things but we didn't get old ...

DM: When you say, you know you said it was important for education and sports and other things ... as a child did you do all those different things?

MN: I didn't.

DM: You didn't?

MN: I didn't. Because after school I have to rush back home because I was having my little, my big sister she is fainting and now I have to look after her, so I didn't do all those things.

DM: So you felt that maybe ... when you were a kid you missed out on all those things?

MN: Ja, I missed all those things.

DM: Because you had to take care of a few things at home?

MN: Ja, my sister and when my father when he comes, before he stayed with the stepmother.

AV: I just wanted to know, when you got married did you carry on schooling?

MN: Ja, I did carry on schooling.

AV: So you used to go home to your husband every day from school?

MN: Ja, but I started when I was stayed with the in-laws. When I was staying with the in-laws I was still going to school until we found our own place - I was still schooling.

DM: And you went all the way through, I'm assuming, to matric?

MN: Yes. At those times I was still staying home because I was still schooling and then I fell pregnant - I must stay at home, taking care of the child. After that I must carry on again and the years are moving on. But I didn't give-up.

DM: So when was it that you eventually finished your matric, how old were you by that time?

MN: I think I was 23 or 24, somewhere there.

DM: So you are saying that a lot of your school was disrupted and you kept on coming back again and again?

MN: Ja.

DM: When did you have your first child?

MN: When I was 16 years, it was 1985.

DM: Okay, when you were 16 that was around the time when a lot of things were happening in this community?

MN: Ja.

DM: What was like because this community was on fire at that time?

MN: When I was having a child and when those things were happening, I saw them happening but my mind, my thought - because I was now staying with the in laws - I couldn't take my mind on those things because I was on pressure. I had to be with the in-laws, to do the job inside, but I saw those things. Those things they did disturb the

community and they did make all the peoples lives to go back because all the shops were burned, the people would have to move to some other peoples, like the whites or the Indians who were selling things here - they have to move to the safe place.

DM: So, putting it mildly, it wasn't particularly a great environment to bring a kid into at that time as a 16 year-old?

MN: Ja. But by that time because I was so young I didn't think that it is going to be like this, everything was just like ... I didn't never mind anything. But now since I am grown up and working with the community, now I can see that I have missed all the time but now I am thankful because I am serving for the community and I can tell the people the truth, I can counsel them, I can show them the way.

DM: Just on that line - did you feel that when you finally got your education you were giving back ... you said you are paying for it ... that you owed something back?

MN: Ja.

DM: Why did you feel that?

MN: Two things which I have to say. First, I didn't play in my childhood and now I have to be example to my children so that they mustn't take my foot steps. And secondly because of the things which has happened to me while my mother was passed away. So, I must show the community and guide them ... maybe the orphans or the children who have left with their father or mothers, I must help them because I have seen what has happened to me.

DM: Okay, and tell us a little bit about what it was like as a 16/17 year-old mother, trying to do these ... what was that like?

MN: It was hard because sometimes I had to compete with the older women than me.

DM: When you say compete what do you mean?

MN: Ja because I didn't know anything, I was still a child. They didn't show me the way instead they had to ... I don't know what to say ... instead of encouraging me, so there wasn't a good example to me. I didn't know anything, everything to me was blank. I started to notice things when I was still growing up and seeing what other people are doing. I learned by myself.

AV: And you were staying with your husband's family?

MN: Ja but for one year and then we move out. When my first born, when I started to fall pregnant, we were staying at our own home. It was a two-room house and when it's raining the water was falling like this inside the room. So we had to take the bucket and throw the water out of the room. And then when my child was 10 days I started to get sick. I didn't raise him very nice, I had to stop breast feeding him.

AV: Okay, what was wrong?

MN: Something was wrong because I did eat something which was poison and then the doctor said I must stop breast feeding my son. It took a couple of months, I went to

Baragwanath and all the doctors said they saw a tokolosh. I was in ICU and when I tried to pass urine there was a excretion that was coming instead of the urine.

AV: Have those medical issues gotten better?

MN: Ja they did get better.

AV: And when you finished your matric, how did you become herbalist then?

MN: Eish it's a long way.

DM: Tell us the story?

MN: I started to be a nurse and then after I trained I went to work there at Hillbrow Hospital in Johannesburg - I worked for one year as a volunteer. There, I was so clever, because there was a project of the field workers, we were going to some places like Ekurhuleni and where, where, where ... we were investigating, trying to find out about the organisations or if government is servicing their organisations or what. So, after that I met my other friend and she told me about this school of herbal and then I attended this school for three years. After that I opened my dispensary/chemist.

AV: How could you afford it?

MN: Hey it's hard. Let me say, before I went there at the nursing school I was suffering because I was divorced and I had to stay with the children, I had no money to go there to school so I was still selling like my mother used to sell, food. And then those people which I was selling to them, maybe I was having four years selling to them, since my son, my baby, was five months, starting to sell. Then those people they said, no Poppy you mustn't suffer like this. They donate for me and then I went to that school. After finishing that school then I worked there as a volunteer - sometimes they pay us, sometimes they don't. When my friend told me about this school I thought even to that school I was still suffering to pay the fees ...I was suffering before I went to school, even our principal, she knows that Poppy will come late. Every day it was a meeting for me - why you came late - but I didn't give up. I was selling until I finished then I tried to open my own. Even here I started it by myself because I have to pay the rent for 2 offices, I have to buy the herbs, there are so expensive, because I have to go to the nurseries. You will find a tree which is more powerful and I have to buy that tree for R180, one tree. Then I have to pop out the money from my pocket, so it's difficult. If I don't have patients, no money.

DM: I'm just going to go back a little bit to the time after you had your first child and you were 16 ... you said you eventually got your matric when you were 23, so that must have been in the early '90s when you finished high school?

MN: Ja.

DM: All during that time, did you have another child before you finished?

MN: Yes I did have before I finished - two, they came.

DM: Two more?

MN: Yes, two before I finished.

DM: So by the time that you got your matric you already had three children?

MN: Ja.

DM: And your husband, what was he doing?

MN: My husband was working.

DM: Doing what?

MN: He was working there at SAMANCOR. But by those time, when he was still working, I did sell because selling things was on my blood. Then I opened a tuck shop because I had to assist him, because there was more kids now. Until the day comes when our marriage ends-up.

DM: When did you get divorced ... by that time, how old were you?

MN: Is eight years now.

DM: About eight years ago, so about 1999?

MN: No it's 2001.

DM: 2001?

MN: Yes, seven years.

AV: What was the reason you got divorced?

MN: Hey the reason is personal.

DM: Okay that's fine. So when you eventually got your matric ...

MN: But I can say it to you because sometimes I can hide it but sometimes it can teach you something. You see sometimes if you have got a wife, you must give her a full love. We got married at a younger stage and then if the husband doesn't give the woman most of the love inside the house then he is taking it outside, then the woman will look for another love. So that's what has happened between us. Then we split up.

DM: So that's was something you did, you decided that it needed to come to an end?

MN: No it was not me, it was his decision.

DM: It was his decision?

MN: Yes.

MN: So when you finished matric then you said you started going to nursing school right?

MN: Ja.

DM: What school did you go to?

MN: It was Theobora College School, there past Joburg.

DM: At Joburg General Hospital?

MN: It was a college.

DM: What year did you start there, what year did you start training to be a nurse, do you remember?

MN: I don't remember very well because now I have done so many things.

DM: Let me ask you this ... did 1994 mean anything to you, all those changes that happened? Did that make a difference in your life at all?

MN: Ja 1994. You see to me, I cannot see the difference but I can see the worse. Well I'm not speaking on my behalf but I can speak on the community, because during those years I can see that the people are dying. So I'll speak maybe on my department of work ... this disease of AIDS was not closer or familiar to those years but after that, then it began. So the difference is that I see people dying from that year until, until, until now.

DM: When all the political changes took place, you know the new government and democracy and all those things, did you, at that time, think that was going to give new opportunities to you ... ?

MN: Ja I can say that because there was some changes on the political because since I joined that field workers there at Joburg, then we started to ... as I told you that we were going to some different places asking people, having their views, then they combined them into one thing. So we find that for most people their vote will link with this - so from those years the government started to sponsor that ... the project and whatever the people they need, the houses they started to be built. Lots of things have changed.

DM: What made you decide to go to nursing school after all those years doing high school, working very hard, why nursing?

MN: At first I didn't like that work but because in my marriage I was getting sick now and then ... when I was admitted at the hospital I used to fight with the nurses. I see that they don't do their job properly. Then I started to think that maybe I can go ... firstly I started for money when I go there but then I was in the class and I saw the difference - then I enjoyed this work, this nursing work.

DM: Did you get a nursing certificate, did you formally become a nurse at some point?

MN: Yes I did. I can say it was because of the community.

DM: They were helping you?

MN: Yes because I served them food ...in return they helped me also.

DM: So what you are saying is that without the community you would never have been able to get that chance to do that?

MN: Ja.

DM: ... what shifted you towards becoming a herbalist? Because nursing is a very scientific, you know, western medicines, these kinds of things?

MN: Its long.

DM: You can tell us?

MN: You see the herbs I like them very much because you can compete with the medical doctors. Because now eish, this thing I enjoy it very much I don't know how to explain it but they cannot treat most of the illness right. What I hate is to give a patient tablets more and more, as long as he is still alive. But the herbs they can take the illness away and maybe for such a short time. But when you go to the medical doctors they can inject you, they can give you tablets and then that illness cannot go away easily because when the tablets are finished you must go back to the doctor again. So the herbs, they can take the illness out of the system, permanent. Like for example I can talk about arthritis. Arthritis they say it's a permanent damage, but when I treat most of my patients they get well, they get well and in a short time. Once I apply the massage oil into their system, into their body and then get into the system it takes away all the coldness in the skin and in the bones. So the herbs are more good than a doctor.

DM: Ok so what made you to realise that? I mean you got a nursing certificate so the natural thing for you to do at that point would be to go and work in a hospital or work in the clinic or something. So, what made you want to make the shift to go and study to be a herbalist?

MN: Well I can say it's because in fact first, I was doing it for money. I didn't see the difference at first, I was doing it for money. But when I was still at school because sometimes we were going to the houses checking the patient ... then that's where I see that no, hospitals they cannot go nearer to this because now all the patients which we are attending to, they have their tablets and they are still drinking them but the illness, it doesn't go away. So that's when I conclude that I must be a herbalist, like it or not, because the herbs are more powerful than the tablets or injection.

DM: Was there anyone who influenced you positively or...?

MN: No.

DM: It was your decision?

MN: It was my decision. The patients, they are the ones who motivated me because when we go to them, when we visited them we found out about their stories, about the treatment from the doctors, medical doctors, the clinic, the hospitals - that's when I combined those things and I see that no, I must be a herbalist. Because, if I combine this and this and treat this person, he can be alright and then I did that and then all the people were alright. I can tell you that tomorrow morning I'm going to Meyerton, I'm going to deliver maybe 30 bottles of men's problem medicine - that medicines are working.

DM: When you say 'men's problem' do you mean that's like taking instead of Viagra or...?

MN: Ja, the men's problem because sometimes most of the people they have early ejaculation, some of them you know those problems. Then I have got my bottles, it's 500 ml, then if I put my medicines inside there and a patient drinks that medicine he is going to want more and there is going to be a stable relationship with his wife. You see, now I am saving the marriages now. As I told you that I have to serve the community, I don't want the same mistake which has happened to me to apply to others. When I sell my medicine I tell them that this one, there will be no divorce, it is going to make the happy

couple inside the house and it's for sure. The husband won't go away, he is going to need his wife near.

(Change of tape)

DM: We're back on. I wanted to ask you ... when you said you went to herbalist school, where was that?

MN: That herbal school it was here in Evaton and then I changed and go to Joburg to finish up my last year.

DM: Tell us a little bit about the courses you would take - was it a registered, formal school?

MN: Ja it was a registered school. There, our teachers were the traditional doctors. Then I was something else in the classroom because those traditional doctors ... I can say I was having more, my mind was more than theirs. Because now I did know everything because I was from the nursing school. When I was taught by the sangomas, the traditional doctors, then I think no, these people they can not teach me. But for two years I go with them until the third year, I finished it at Joburg. There at Joburg that's where I started to teach myself about so many things because now I'm no longer doing those traditional medicines, now I'm using herbs like flowers, food like apples, anything I can turn it into tablets, oils, salve ... and then I teach myself about aromatherapy. And all of them they are getting at the same level of the herbal.

DM: Okay and all during this time you've now got these four children of yours right?

MN: Ja.

DM: They are growing up ... now tell us - we asked you previously what was it like to be a 16/17 year-old - so now you are shifting another ten years you are doing these things ... how is it then for you as a mother, till that point?

MN: It was not so hard but what was making it so hard sometimes ... it was before I went to nursing, I saw that this money which I was doing at the municipal people where I was selling, it was too small and then I had to go and sell food at Joburg, at Spoornet people. Then I wasn't sleeping at all, I was sleeping for just one and a half hour, because when I get home early in the morning I had to go and stock cows feet, go and buy some flour to make some dumpling, fat cakes. So, during the night I'm not sleeping, I'm making fat cakes and during the day I'm still scrubbing these cows legs so that I must cut them into four pieces. I don't rest at anytime and I don't have time for the children. At night I'm not sleeping, I'm busy making fat cakes. At one o'clock, two o'clock I am going out to catch the first train here and it is dark by that time. Sometimes when I was going early so that when those people are getting to work, really five o'clock, I must be there so that they must buy my stuff. Nine o'clock I'm in the train and I'm going back home. Sometimes I fell asleep in the train, I will find myself lost in the Soweto location, I have to walk back from the train to go to the location. Then it was difficult because I have to maintain them even though their father was still supporting them but he was giving us little money. So, I was supposed to help myself.

DM: And how do you think that that impacted on your children, what you were having to do, not spending much time with them, being gone most of the time?

MN: Because they saw that they have to survive and I was telling them, you see if I have to stay you won't have to eat, so I had to move on.

DM: So did the older children take care of the younger children?

MN: Yes.

DM: Did you have any family members to help out?

MN: No.

DM: As a mother how do you think your children have turned out ...?

MN: Now?

DM: Yes.

MN: Now they have grown up and they like each other. You see, since my children used to stay alone, now if I want someone to stay with them they don't want. They are used to staying alone because most of the time I'm not with them. Like now, I'm not staying with them now because I'm staying at DD now because I'm staying with someone else ... but daily, I come to my house daily. Now they used to stay on their own, they don't want someone else.

DM: So your children are still living in your old house there, by themselves?

MN: Yes.

DM: What ages now are they?

MN: The last one is six years.

DM: And the oldest?

MN: The oldest is twenty one. He is working.

DM: So after you finished herbal school you said you then came back to the community and opened up your own business?

MN: Yes.

DM: Tell us a little bit about that what it took to do that. Because obviously you had very little capital to start with ... and how the community responded to your efforts?

MN: When I started to work here I started to treat people poor people with no money. I didn't charge them and those people, maybe I treated two people for free and then maybe they tell others. So those others they came here and when they came here I treated them and they get well - so that's where the community come to know me.

AV: What kinds of things were you treating?

MN: I was treating the people, some of them were having arthritis, some of them it's just the knee pain, some of them were the patients with HIV/AIDS so I am giving them the treatment. I started to cook for them - when I started working here I was cooking for them, giving them treatment after eating. As time goes on, those ones that are HIV, when

they see they get well they say no we want to get the government money so this herbalist is going to make us well and we won't get the money, so they don't come anymore. So I stop that thing and I go on with my work as a herbalist.

AV: I think we want to talk about the treatment of HIV/AIDS but before that ... So, the majority, the main things that you are known for, what would they be?

MN: Yeah, that which I wish I can be famous about, there are so many. First, this one which I was talking about, the men's problem ... because everyone who is coming here he wants that bottle. Then secondly, it is that one of HIV/AIDS. But people now they do come, but some of them don't because some of them are afraid to come here now saying if I come here my neighbour will see me.

DM: You said you have built up your clientele from starting to treat people for free ... now, how many people, on a regular basis, do you see everyday let's say?

MN: You see now what I'm doing, I'm not staying in the surgery any more, I'm coming here by an appointment. (Pause) Now, I'm not here anymore everyday maybe I come twice because I have to make money outside. Here I work Tuesday and Thursday because I see that when I'm inside here some of the patients they are at work, they are on duty so I must go out to the fabrics, that's what I'm doing. So here, I come by an appointment. When someone phones, then I come.

DM: Otherwise you move around a lot?

MN: Ja, I move around.

DM: What is your relationship with other medical doctors in the area, people who are practicing ... ?

MN: I have got one in Meyerton he is a white guy and he is got his surgery and it is a nice surgery. But now you see, I like competition because now he is buying his stuff from overseas. He doesn't have fresh plants like me and then he doesn't make everything for himself he just buy. So myself, that's why I like competition because I do the oils by fresh plants so I don't have to buy at all, I buy just plants. So, we differ there. Even our prices - because he is in town he is so expensive and then because I'm in the location, I'm lesser. I used to pay visit to him he is the only one. Then I've got my friend there, he is a medical doctor, he is an Indian doctor, Asmal. He can't treat arthritis, so he wants me to tell him how am I treating my patients. I can't tell him.

DM: Do you refer people? Maybe some people come to you with a condition that you don't feel like you can deal with it ... do you refer them to a doctor...?

MN: No. Right now I didn't come across that problem.

DM: So you don't get people coming to you with let say a broken arm or something like that?

MN: No.

DM: People know they come to you for other ailments?

MN: Ja. Because I have written them down and then I have got my posters all around places like at Dedeur, Meyerton - so I get the call and I can respond from those. So when a person have read those pamphlets he knows what services I'm offering.

AV: I want to know in terms of HIV, how do you treat HIV-AIDS?

MN: I have got couple of flowers. I mix them and I make a infusion with them. With that infusion he must drink it then he is going to get well, he is going to boost his immune systems.

AV: Okay, you said you also cook for people with HIV?

MN: Ja at first I was. Then these people ... when they come here weaker then after few months, maybe two months, when they get their strength, they don't come. You will find them there where they sell beer, so they don't come. When you ask them they say no, you want me not to get the grant money anymore, so I won't come anymore, my friends told me not to come and I want to earn before I die. They said they think so.

AV: ... just in terms of anti-retrovirals, what's your approach to them?

MN: I can say my treatment is like those ARVs, ja the same. But I don't know, I cannot guarantee that but what I know is that my patients, when I gave them that treatment, their immune system is becoming better.

AV: And there are people who use both your treatment and ARVs?

MN: No. When they come to me I told them not to mix them. Any patient of mine when he comes from the hospital, he mustn't use it because he won't see the difference.

AV: Okay and just in terms of ... you were saying people don't want to use the medicine because if they do then they don't get the grant anymore. Do you find a lot of that, where people allow their immune system to deteriorate so that they are able to get access to grants?

MN: Ja ... I see that because most of the people they are looking for money. So when they are looking for money they are looking for the way they will get the money. So from me they know maybe they don't get the letter to get the grant ... so from the clinic, that's where they are going to get the letter to get the grant.

DM: And just out of interest, do you deal with paediatrics, any ages ... do you deal with children as well?

MN: Ja I deal with the children as well. But since now I haven't come across with that problem since it is adult only.

AV: I see you have got here, 'Talk to your partner about SDI's' (points to poster on the wall). Do you treat a lot of other sexually transmitted illnesses?

MN: Ja. You see that treatment, also it can treat that.

AV: So what other SDI's do you see?

MN: No. That treatment which I did talk about - that men's problem - it can treat anything coming across men's problems.

AV: So it treats drop?

MN: Ja even if its drop and then it can treat anything ...

AV: When people come to you with SDI's, do you advise them about, for example, speaking to their partner and so forth?

MN: Ja.

AV: About partner notification?

MN: Ja. Actually it's a sort of like counselling you see. When someone is getting inside here, he or she must get counselling.

DM: Is not just about giving a bottle, you talk about the issues?

MN: We must talk about it. Sometimes, someone even if it is not that problem, I can make her, I can see that this person has a stress, she has got a depression. I must counsel her so that when she leaves this room she must feel better.

DM: What do you think ... you've been practicing ... what do you think of the clinics here in the area, the hospitals and their care, the care they give to the community - what do you think about that?

MN: It is difficult to say to that because now you see people they have got their choices. And when they have got their choices, I think the herbs - even at the hospitals they can use the herbs ... we can differ, we differ so much. I don't know how to explain that.

DM: What kinds of service - you previously talked about the kinds of services at the hospital - what kind of service do you think people are getting at the public clinics and hospitals, not just about the medicines but the services?

MN: It's not like us. Because there, some of the patients they are running from the clinics because they said they don't get good services. There at the hospitals there are so many and the nurses they get angry so quickly. When they get to us they get counselling - there they cannot get counselling and they cannot take out what is in their mind. But here, when they get here that can find counselling, better treatment everything.

DM: And what did you do when somebody comes to you and they don't have much money to pay you for the things?

MN: That's a good question. First I was doing that for free at first, but now it seems as if money is getting ill, all the people they are now getting used to me now. So I think people who have no money, I have to treat them for free. Like last week, there was a school boy who came to me and he was having more problems, he was so stressed and that boy even though he doesn't tell me his problems - he tell me half of his problems. So, I told him that if he is hiding something I cannot help him because now I have to counsel him ... because I can give him treatment and that problem doesn't go away. I can give him all to the massage to the legs, medicine to the heart, but the problem will stay in here, it's better to cough it out. So he says he is going to come again and he is going to tell me what is happening. So that boy doesn't have money, his parents doesn't work. So, I talk to him

telephonically so then he came personally, he is still a young boy. Then I concluded that I call him and I treat him for free.

DM: What do you think ... you know you are a health practitioner, you are helping people dealing with some of these illnesses ... what do you think about the health of this community generally? I mean if you look around this community that you've been living in, what do you see? You mentioned that things have changed, since back ten-fifteen years ago - what do you see now mostly?

MN: Ja, I can say that to avoid more illness like the one who is killing us now is because people we don't listen, we don't listen and we don't believe. Our beliefs are not the same. So at first we were told that we must be faithful, we must do what and what and now we don't do that. What I can say is that a person, his heart is the controller of his body so if a person cannot have a choice what he wants in his life, with his health, no one can because you can not force him to do what he doesn't want to do.

DM: It seems like what you are saying is that things are going fairly well for you after a long, long period that you have built up. Are you happy now for the way things are for yourself or what would you like to see different?

MN: I'm not.

DM: You are not?

MN: Yes.

DM: What kinds of things would you like to happen to make that better?

MN: Personally for myself I would be happy maybe, because now I'm not staying with my children, if I can find a nanny for them, if I can renew my house. Now is the time when money is starting to get in and I have got more things in my mind. Firstly I have to find a nanny, then I have to renew my house and then I have to get more herbs. Some of them I cannot find them here, they are at overseas and I cannot go there and find them. Then sometimes it's a big stress for me because some of the patients they come and I don't have that treatment then I have to find a simpler treatment to help her.

DM: Are you part of any association, a grouping of healers or anything like that or you are just on your own?

MN: No, I'm just by myself, on my own.

DM: And most of what you use, just out of interest, most of what you use in terms of herbs is obviously South African, is indigenous here to South Africa?

MN: Yes.

DM: Just a few last couple of questions I want to ask you. When you look at ... this is not something specific to you being a healer but as a member of the community who is involved and sees a lot of people ... what kinds of things do you think need to change in this community or do you think things are okay. I mean you talked about people not listening, that's one of them, but outside of that in terms of people's lives here? Because you obviously have a particular insight into seeing different people's lives in this

community,. What do you think are the main problems, the good things and the bad things?

MN: The good thing is that people must help each other firstly because one needs to wash the other hands. And secondly, because the example is that if the community didn't help me I was supposed not to be here. And then about government I can not talk so much ... some of the things are happening like the houses and the organisations, some of them are getting the funds. That's what I can see now.

DM: And when you look in the future, what are you dreaming of, what are your dreams from now?

MN: My dreams are with my kids. Everyday when I sleep I am thinking about them and what I am doing now I'm doing for them, that is my dream. My dream is to buy a car - wherever I'm going I must go with them. Because now I'm struggling to get the herbs, I have to ... someone must drive me with his car to go, maybe we pass Joburg to get the herbs. The car is my dream.

DM: Okay ... We've asked some very specific questions but if there's something we have not talked about or covered that you would like to say for yourself ... anything?

MN: You have talked so many things, even my head now is ringing.

DM: Do you think we have covered it all?

MN: I think so, even if now I did forget because we have spoken about so many things. But what is the fact is that we must help each other as a community and we must love each other. Like when a person is coming to me he doesn't have anything to eat or whatsoever. Now I'm trying to find food, I was collecting donations from the shops and I have to go back. There are people who are sleeping without food so they must come and eat here daily. That's what I can do.

AV: Thank you.

DM: Thanks very much.

MN: Thanks.

MINUTES - 51:58