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### **INTERVIEW WITH BAFANA EZEKIEL MAKHANYA.**

**Dale McKinley (DM):** First of all, thank you Bafana for talking with us. Okay, just for the record Bafana can you state your full name and where you are from?

**Bafana Ezekiel Makhanya (BEM):** My name is Bafana Ezekiel Makhanya and I live in Sebokeng zone 6.

**DM:** Bafana we are going to start with some personal questions. Tell us where you were born?

**BEM:** I was born in Nkhandla in Kwazulu Natal and my parents took me to this place Sebokeng where I'm staying now.

**DM:** Ok, and what year were you born Bafana?

**BEM:** I was born in 1963.

**DM:** 1963 aah I didn't know you are that young.

**DM:** And how long did you stay in Nkhandla before your parents moved to Sebokeng?

**BEM:** I was just visiting my parents here in Evaton but they started by staying in Rustenburg and then they came to Sebokeng in Evaton.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** What kind of work were your parents doing?

**BEM:** My mother was not working and my father was working at TPA (Transvaal Provincial Administration).

**DM:** Before you came to Sebokeng what was your father doing in Nkhandla, what kind of work?

**BEM:** I can't remember I was still young. I was herding the cattle's but I am not sure of what he was doing. All I know was that my father was working in Joburg.

**DM:** What age did you move, how old were you when you came to Johannesburg?

**BEM:** I am not quite sure about the age. But during my first time I went to Thokoza at my aunt's - my mother's younger sister - before I moved to Evaton.

**DM:** Ok, when you say you can't remember can you give us an estimation. Were you 5 years, 10, 15 ... do you remember?

**BEM:** I think I was around 15 or 16 years.

**DM:** Ok and when you were in Nkhandla did you go to school as well?

**BEM:** No, I started school in Thokoza.

**DM:** So you started school when you were 15 years old?

**BEM:** Yes, I started in Thokoza and they gave me a promotion because I was old.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** How far did you go in school?

**BEM:** I was walking a long distance but it was inside the stands.

**AV:** Ok, I mean how far in terms of grades did you go to?

**BEM:** I started in STD 1. I passed there and I moved to Sebokeng where I passed my STD 5. I also passed Form 2. It was called Form 2 at that time and I was awarded 2 certificates, one for STD 5 and the other one was for Form 2.

**DM:** Ok let's just go back a little. Tell us a little bit more about what it was like growing up in Nkhandla ... in that area as a child?

**BEM:** It was difficult to grow up in Nkhandla. But what I liked about Nkhandla, there was a lot of respect. We were respecting our parents; if they send us we had no choice but to go wherever they are sending you. We were not allowed to disagree with the elders of the village. It was difficult because my father was here in Johannesburg and I was living with my mother and my father would visit us sometimes in December - he would come with things from Joburg for us.

**AV:** What was the big difference for you when you moved to Thokoza?

**BEM:** I was living a very difficult life in Thokoza, at my aunt, because I was doing washing and ironing it, whereas the ladies were there. That's where life was difficult.

**DM:** Are you saying this because you thought that was the women's job to do?

**BEM:** I thought it was not good to touch ladies clothes. I was under pressure and left with no choice but to do the work.

**AV:** Ok just generally life in Thokoza - how did you find it, outside the house?

**BEM:** It was just a life as us children would go outside to play on the street. And everyone was doing what you want. We played on the street and the old people will go out and drink beer.

**DM:** ... living in Nkhandla and then coming to Thokoza .. one of the big differences might have been having to deal with the apartheid system from a close range. How did you find the differences growing up in a rural area like Nkhandla and coming to a township like Thokoza, in terms of the authorities at that time - because that would have been in the 1970s?

**BEM:** There was a very big difference between Thokoza and Nkhandla. What I know about Nkhandla is there were fights and life was not that fast in Nkhandla compared to Thokoza. If one cattle is missing fights will take place. It was not a very peaceful place because of these fights. In Thokoza life is very fast. We in Nkhandla we were forced to the obedience of the authority. On the other hand when I arrived in Gauteng I find that Zulus don't want other cultures like the Sothos to mix with them - they were fighting. The Zulus would just group themselves together and felt that this is our territory and without mixing with the other people who are not Zulus.

**DM:** Ok so let's just move on a little bit and ask you ...when you moved from Thokoza and came to Sebokeng when you came to Sebokeng were there any differences in this area versus Thokoza and did things change for you in terms of the kinds of things that you are taking about .. (i.e.) - the different people from the different groups or the peacefulness of the Vaal?

**BEM:** There was a difference. By that time, when my father got a house in Sebokeng zone 7A, there was a mix, people were living together and there were Zulus, Shangaans, Tswanas and Sotho. When time goes on the Zulus moved to another place and called it a Zulu section which was in Zone 7B - that's when the differences came and people started to be divided according to their culture.

**AV:** Do you remember what year it was when they started segregating the township in terms of ethnic identity?

**BEM:** It was in 1978.

**AV:** In the 70s?

**BEM:** Ja.

**AV:** And to move people to different areas did the government have a problem with moving people who were staying in one area to the next?

**BEM:** It did not have a problem, actually it was an order and they would just tell you at the office that you must move to zone 7a or 7b your house has been approved there.

**AV:** At that time what were you doing when you moved to Evaton?

**BEM:** I was still attending school and after school I was selling apples and bananas in the train.

**DM:** And when your father ...where was your father working at that time when you moved and he bought a house in Sebokeng?

**BEM:** From the 70s he was an old man and he was no longer working.

**AV:** The house that you were staying in - did your father buy that house or was it a council house that you were renting?

**BEM:** It was for the municipality and we were paying the rent.

**AV:** So if your father wasn't working then how was your family surviving?

**BEM:** By that time my old brother was working driving PUTCO busses and my sisters were also working in Vaalpotris - they were assisting each other with the households. They were bringing money in the family.

**DM:** How many brothers and sisters do you have or did you have?

**BEM:** Sisters are 2 and men we are 7 , in all we are 9. Before others passed away we were 14, an then only 9 were left.

**DM:** And where do you fall, youngest, oldest, in the middle somewhere?

**BEM:** I am the last-born that's why they are calling me Bafana.

**DM:** By the time Bafana when you moved to Sebokeng you were saying in the late 70s ja ... tell us how was it like living there in the 1980s, in that area with all the things that were going on? Were you involved? What were you doing during those years?

**BEM:** Yes in 1984 when the Asinamali Campaign started I was working at the hospital at that time doing a chemist job and in the theatre. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1984 I was the one who was distributing the pamphlets to call the people for the strike.

**AV:** Just before we move to the campaign tell us about how did you find a job at the hospital?

**BEM:** My brother who was working at the hospital is the one who organised an interview for me and then I passed the interview and got the job.

**AV:** Was that your first job?

**BEM:** Yes.

**AV:** What were you doing?

**BEM:** I worked at the Chemistry because at school I did Maths and Physics. But if sometimes there was more work at the theatre they would call me to assist them with scissors, things like that.

**AV:** Tell us a little bit about how you first got involved in the Asinamali Campaign?

**BEM:** It was one day after work when others have left, I talked to this other guy and his name was Mahlomola. I told him that we must take part in the Campaign since it affected us. Then we agreed to do the pamphlet. After doing the pamphlet, the machine jammed. The other thing that nearly put us in serious trouble was that we did not get permission from the lady who was using the machine.

**AV:** What happened ... did you get into trouble for that?

**BEM:** Yes, but the pamphlets were already gone. We were arrested and taken to Klip River and they threatened to throw us in the water and they took us to Vereeniging police station and they tortured us and asked us where did we get this idea. They threatened to throw us in the river. The hospital expelled us from the hospital because we would bring influence to their staff. They took us into custody and tortured us, asking us whether we belong to any of the ANC, PAC or IFP. It was terrible because I lost my job.

**DM:** Ok so after you had been expelled did you continue with the political activities?

**BEM:** Yes, at the police station they put us in different cells and they stripped us of our clothes. They were looking for the information and they never found it. They let us go. We distributed those pamphlets to the community and the community knew what to do. And we continued with our strike.

**AV:** Tell us a little bit about the Campaign in the Vaal? How successful it was this Asinamali Campaign?

**BEM:** Yes there was unity, unity was our strength. Even when we hold the meetings people would come in numbers. It didn't matter which organisation you come from but we were united with one common goal, all the people were determined for one goal which was the struggle. The counsellors ran away to urban areas and they were scared of us - they could not even report us. We knew that whatever we say has to happen because if we don't pay the rent we were going to be evicted. Therefore people had no alternative than to fight for their rights.

**AV:** And Bafana ..at the time while you were involved in mobilising the Asinamali Campaign, you were not working?

**BEM:** Yes, after I was released from prison I was expelled from the work because of my involvement in the Campaign. I think it was the right time to involve fully in the Campaign.

**AV:** Ok and then when did you start working again?

**BEM:** I started again in 1984, October, in SAMANCOR. That was my second company.

**AV:** When you started at SAMANCOR what kind of work were you doing there?

**BEM:** My first job was to make tea for the foreman. The second one was to work at the craning, driving the crane and my third job was to work at the metal fire. My last job - I applied at the lab and I spent most of my time in there.

**AV:** And at the time when you joined SAMANCOR did you also join NUMSA?

**BEM:** Yes, I joined.

**AV:** Immediately, when you started working?

**BEM:** I joined immediately when I arrived there.

**AV:** Tell us a little bit about how you were recruited into NUMSA?

**BEM:** No one recruited me to join NUMSA; I just knew that it is important for me to associate with NUMSA because I knew that in the case of trouble NUMSA will be there for you.

**AV:** ... you were involved in the Asinamali Campaign and also with NUMSA. What were the kinds of links between the union at SAMANCOR and the Asinamali Campaign?

**BEM:** Asinamali Campaign was already passed when I got the job at SAMANCOR and then I joined NUMSA because Asinamali Campaign took place in 1984.

**DM:** Ok I wanted to ask you a little personal question. When you started working it was 1984 and you were probably 20/21 years old. When you started working at SAMANCOR were you married at that time, did you have a family or were you still a single man?

**BEM:** No.

**DM:** You were single?

**BEM:** Ja.

**DM:** Ok when did you get married?

**BEM:** I can't remember well but I think it was in the 80s because my first child was born in 1985.

**DM:** Ok so soon after you started working?

**BEM:** Yes.

**DM:** From the mid 1980s onwards obviously your life changed quite a lot yes, you had a permanent job, you are a member of a union, you got married and you had a child. So how did your life change for you during that time in terms of all the things that were happening around ... at the work place and in the community?

**BEM:** There was no changes because I liked strikes. Even at work when we liked something we would organise a march - but by that time I was still staying alone but my first born was already born and the first time when I moved in with my wife was in 1990 because I was still staying with my parents.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit about the working conditions. You told us about the job that you did in SAMANCOR from doing the tea, cranes all those things ... did you find yourself very quickly active in the work place as well?

**BEM:** There was no safety. First thing that I can say is that people were dying - the funnel that we were using sometimes could explode and kill people. Secondly they would tell us not to touch a metal while still hot, it would heat you up - that's why they used to hire foreigners not people from the townships. There was no safety at all.

**AV:** Bafana, to what an extent was there a NUMSA campaign around safety issues at that time?

**BEM:** NUMSA did very little when coming to safety. What SAMANCOR did was that they only gave us masks that you will put on for many days even if the mask was dirty to put it on our face when we are near the funnel so that we could not get burnt on our faces. Workers also complained about when they coughed, they were coughing blood.

**AV:** I want to ask you ... I remember another SAMANCOR worker talking about the strike campaign, I think it was 1987; tell us little bit about that?

**BEM:** Yes, in 1987 there was a big strike in SAMANCOR. Our representative (shop steward) went to negotiate for higher wages but they was no agreement and when they came back we started the strike. Even there I was the first to fight against NUMSA because when they came from the meeting they would tell us different stories. What was not good about NUMSA was that when they come back from the meeting they would tell

you different stories. I started to destroy NUMSA's cars because I think if they are the organisers they can't just go to speak to the management without talking to us first.

**DM:** Ok Bafana now we have dealt with a lot of your life issues in the 70s and 80s ... now tell us, when things began to change after 1990 politically how did your life change or how did you see things that were happening both in the workplace and the community?

**BEM:** After 1994, I thought life would change. What happened was that things became worse. Children no longer respecting the elders in the community. There is a lot of violence, rape increased and criminal activities. They were talking about freedom and we thought it was the real freedom but it never happened - it's just gone to worse.

**DM:** Ok , I wanted to talk specifically about 1994, not after 1994. During that period where things were happening, negotiations were starting, the liberation movements were unbanned ... in that period 1990-1994, those 4 years there, what was happening in Sebokeng and were you involved? Tell us a little bit about what was happening politically for the movements, the struggles ... did they change, did they remain the same in those years in particular?

**BEM:** After 1994 life has really changed but there were more conflicts. There was the formation of other political parties, for example, the UDM. We were confused as the community and I was also confused and I told myself that I had to pull out from politics because people were more concerned about themselves than the human rights.

**DM:** What kinds of struggles were taking place in your community during 1994?

**BEM:** The biggest strike was the one in September. By that time the ANC wanted to be the only organisation and that thing brought confusion to the people. At the same time, people thought that if Mandela came out of prison it will bring freedom, people are confused and think Mandela brought freedom, Mandela never brought freedom. Freedom was brought by the people who were striking, burning tyres and others were even killed. I believe that people from the grassroots brought freedom. They were struggling, got tortured and killed.

**DM:** What in particular ... how did you experience the kinds of conflicts that took place in the Vaal during those years particularly with regards to the IFP and what was going on in the hostels and in the communities and those things?

**BEM:** The IFP was called Inkhata the organisation that was more of cultural organisation to help people - for instance, if people have cultural activities taking place at their places. Buthelezi changed it to politics. Zulus are violent, violence is in their culture. In politics you should not be allowed to kill each other. Even the ANC was involved in some of the killings and destroyed houses of the people but they were not blamed for that, it was always Inkhata. What was hurting was that the black people were killing each other. People think that the IFP was killing only other cultures but I think this is not true because, they were killing people in the trains, streets and in the hostels, they were even killing the Zulus because how did they know that this is not a Zulu.

**DM:** During that time were you and your family affected by what was going on with all the conflict and violence?

**BEM:** I would say yes but not that much because I was one of the Zulus. I never saw myself running with my family, afraid of anybody. Actually I was ready for anyone who can come ... I told my family to stay in the house not to run away because I was prepared for anything that could happen.

**DM:** Going back to previous questions that we asked ... in the 1990s, during that time around the 1994 period - was NUMSA as a union from your work place involved in any way in what was going on outside SAMANCOR in the community?

**BEM:** No, it was not involved; it was sitting in their offices.

**AV:** And were there members of NUMSA that were working at SAMANCOR, that were involved in the community organizations in the Vaal?

**BEM:** Yes they were available. The majority of NUMSA members were part of the struggles in the townships.

**DM:** So do you remember April 1994, the election time?

**BEM:** Yes I remember 1994.

**DM:** What do you remember Bafana?

**BEM:** I remember when we went to vote. Before we vote we were promised that our life would be better and our communities will be fine. I also heard that if the black party won the elections, black people will no longer have to pay for services everything would be free. There were more meetings in the townships organised by the ANC and PAC, I also attended one. There were many parties that were formed and promising us a better life.

**DM:** And after 1994 ... you mentioned the things that have changed, that didn't change, but how did you, let's say for 5 years, from 1994 to 2000, those years there ... what kinds of things did you see happening in the community that were either good or bad, after 1994?

**BEM:** I will start with what has changed. Only little has changed, what has been promised the people has never changed - that people will get free houses, their credit will be cleared and will get free services. Things that have changed are that we no longer have to carry passes when we go around and you can do your own business. But what people need did not change, like work, the police roaming around with the criminals and the councillors steal our money. We thought that after 1994 the law would be strict but it has gone from better to worse because there is a lot of corruption that is going on now.

**AV:** What about in SAMANCOR, what kinds of changes within the work place?

**BFM:** After 1994 there were not much differences. What changed was that our shop steward became full time and a shop steward has to have his own car and company has to fill it with petrol so that if there is meeting he can be able to go and attend - and he does not have to do any job except for being a shop steward. NUMSA were given the office in the company, got paid for nothing and there was nothing they would say against the company. And our masks were changed. Witbank was part A of our company and we

struggled together but the company tried hard and it was different with us in Meyerton. There were no major changes.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit about how things were like with your family and your children?

**BFM:** There was nothing much that has changed after 1994. Before we lived better. But after 1994 my wife discouraged me, saying there is no need for me to talk about politics because we don't benefit from it.

**DM:** And your children at school - how did they relate to you? You said there was no change, but you as a father, what kinds of things have you had to deal with?

**BFM:** I don't spend more time talking to my kids and actually I don't have that time. And culturally we don't talk with kids about HIV/AIDS. In our culture we are not allowed to talk about those things with kids but sometimes we do spend time with kids telling them ABC or instructing them, that they must not be on the street in the night, they must not go to the parties especially because they are young. But now because they have rights, they disrespect their parents because they know that their parents will not punish them. Really, things have changed for the kids, but in my family I try to enforce my rule and tell them that this is my house. I think these rights destroys kids and they disrespect elders.

**DM:** When you were working in SAMANCOR in the 90s, were you satisfied ... were you able to take care of what you and your family needed and were you satisfied with that income?

**BFM:** The wages were very low, but I just told myself that as long as I can be able to buy food for my kids and I just managed to do some of the things.

**DM:** Were you the sole bread winner in the house?

**BFM:** Yes. As I already said, my wife was not working. According to our tradition, she had to stay at home and when I come back she had to tell me who came back from school sick. That was the women's work - to stay at home and look after the children.

**DM:** When did you get retrenched at SAMANCOR and what were the reasons?

**BFM:** We were retrenched in 2001 and we went to the management offices with other workers and we were given the retrenchment letters.

**AV:** You said the company gave you retrenchment letters, what were the reasons?

**BFM:** They said some of the company departments are closing.

**AV:** Did you believe that?

**BFM:** No I didn't believe them.

**AV:** What did you think was the reason?

**BFM:** In 1999, they called a doctor from the University of Cape Town to do the blood tests - they were testing for manganese. Actually by that time people were dying because of manganese and as a result, we were retrenched in 2001.

**DM:** Did you ever have a chance to talk to some other workers that became very ill and were retrenched?

**BFM:** I was also affected by manganese.

**DM:** How so?

**BFM:** I was a very strong person and firstly I couldn't even forget anything. But now, I forgot easily. Normally, if I want to do things I had to write it down and there are pains over my body and also my joints and I think it's the symptoms of manganese.

**AV:** Bafana you were saying that some people who were doing certain types of jobs in SAMANCOR are sicker than others - what certain kinds of jobs?

**BFM:** In that company no one can come out without being sick. No one was not affected by manganese. There were some departments that they were mixing and people would get mad because of what they were mixing with the steel and that was what makes people mad at that department.

**AV:** Now that you are retrenched and many of you are sick what is the way forward for the retrenched workers of SAMANCOR?

**BFM:** We are fighting with the company and we want the company to have responsibility for those people affected. God has given everyone days of life and this company has reduced these days.

**DM:** And then how did you go on trying to do those kinds of things, trying to get compensations? Tell us about what has been happening since you were retrenched?

**BFM:** We have an ongoing case, we are trying to use our lawyers to fight the company because we feel that what SAMANCOR did to us was not good. But at the same time we realised that we cannot fight effectively if some of us are hungry, without jobs - that's why it is very important to get supplies because that money can assist in buying food to continue to live and fight for our rights. The main problem is that the government is supporting SAMANCOR and to make sure that the company could not pay us.

**DM:** What has been the role of the union?

**BFM:** We went to the union and fight them as workers and they did not help and we went to Midrand where there was a meeting with the SACP and COSATU - they were embarrassed and told us like they don't know what was happening. We are very disappointed with NUMSA.

**DM:** And how is it that yourself and the other workers who were retrenched at the same time in 2001 ... how was it for those retrenched workers in the community in terms of making a living?

**BFM:** People are living a difficult life in the location and the other thing is that children go to school on an empty stomach and some are struggling to go to school because of school fees. That's why we decided to fight the company. NUMSA took decisions for ourselves and they are siding with the company and it is difficult to fight the company from outside than if we were inside.

**DM:** Two quick last questions because we are almost done with the interview, First one is were we are now in 2007, 13 years after democracy and you talked about how nothing has changed ... what do you see for your future and your family's future in the next five years ... and after that, what would like to say that we didn't ask?

**BFM:** Firstly from now and for the coming 5 years I just see danger and secondly for myself and my family, I would be more than happy to see it supporting me to be strong and to see other comrades to fight SAMANCOR to realise the importance of people lives.

**MINUTES: - 82:50**