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INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL SERAME MASEMOLA.

Dale McKinley (DM): Just for the record so that we have it on the tape - can you just state your full name please?

Daniel Serame Masemola (DSM): I am Daniel Serame Masemola. I came here in 1965 from the place called Meyerton.

DM: Were you born in Meyerton, is that your home?

DSM: I was born in Henley-on-Klip, district Vereeniging.

DM: What year were you born?

DSM: 1921.

DM: In 1921?

DSM: Yes.

DM: And you lived there until 1965, until you moved here?

DSM: Yes, in 1965 I came here from Meyerton. Should I tell about my wife?

DM: You can tell us whatever you want Daniel.

DSM: I got married to Merriam Dikeledi Moabi and we had 9 children. God gave me those children and I have struggled to give them education and they have now all been educated. When we came here it was difficult; we were given the stamps that these houses will be ours in five years time. But the superintendent from Residentia took those stamps from us so that we cannot get those houses. It was a very serious problem and we fought too much with the committee that we had on this community. The committee said if you don't pay your rent after seven days, they will throw out your belongings and the house will be locked up. When it's been thrown out they will be destroyed by rain and dust. From there, when I thought I was resting I found the letter from the superintendent saying that they are giving people the rights called titles, for the place.

DM: Daniel I just want to ask you ... when you were growing up in Meyerton what was life like when you grow up there in the 1930s and 40s ... can you tell us a little bit about your childhood?

DSM: The world of Meyerton was for Mr Shapiro in 1933, when Meyerton it started to be there. Well my life by that time was quite well, without problems. My father was John Masemola, he was working at the hotel as a chef and he was earning 3 pounds a month. I went to school and my teacher was Mr. Laqua from Sub A. After passing my Std. 7 my first job was at the Mining Springfield as Mapalani (clerk) at Amalgamation. After that I went to Viljoensdrift - I was also a Mapalani. It is a long story, I don't know.

DM: Daniel when you were doing these jobs, when you got your first few jobs there - tell us a little bit about how things were like in terms of your living ... were you married already or did you have children at that point? How was life - was it difficult for you or were things ok?

DSM: I was already married. I remember in 1939 during the war of Adolph Hitler. It was then that hunger came and we even experienced the shortage of mealie-meal. By that time to get mealie-meal you were to go to the queue at around 03h00 in the morning to the place, I was number 7 to buy mealie-meal. I remember one day I was at the queue and the person who has to sold us mealie-meal came and looked at me in my eyes and denies selling me mealie-meal saying I am young. By that time I was having three children. I went back to take my marriage certificate and at that time my children had no food. From there the jobs that I did besides those of mines ... I was in Leuhoof police station because that place was for the soldiers of 1939 at that time for it to be a prison I was one of the builders there. I even built the Vereeniging Court and the police station.

DM: Were you working for yourself as a builder or were you working for someone?

DSM: I was working for that company to build; I was there to carry cement, wheelbarrows that time they used to make a step as far as highest ... then with certain steps on the plank and for a way only for the wheelbarrow upwards and it was loaded down there and I was the first man that the supervisor would call and say come young boy - they called me pickinin - come and push up this wheelbarrow. Then I was there to take a full wheelbarrow with cement running up with it ... But the other people, the big people when they come they could not go up - in fact it was that because I was a trainer I was full, I used to be a boxer. I was full and I had power ja and then those old people, when he is in the middle of the way up the wheelbarrow is falling off and he is discharged at the moment, same time.

DM: So you were very good at what you were doing, they liked the work that you did?

DSM: Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes.

DM: How long did you work as a construction worker there?

DSM: Is only the moment is that how long that house takes ... only how long they take to build a big house.

The interpreter: He asked you how long did you work at the constructions?

DSM: Ooh it was very difficult. People were discharged within seven days, three days, you used to work here and tomorrow you are discharged for nothing. You have got to look ... hey we used to suffer to look for work. And then we were called to come together there at the wire works while we are a group at this time waiting for the managers to come and choose ... I want you, I want you, I want you and the police were there. When the police were there we were all arrested ... that we are loafers while we are looking for the job. There used to be a police man of Vereeniging, he was travelling on the site car motor vehicle - his name was Lang Piet. That man was very strict ... we had those Dom Pass ... when he comes to you he says 'pass' ... you take out your hands and you go at the back of your pockets taking out this pass - then he says *jy sit op die pass on jou gaat* and then he would clap you. It was very difficult. It was very heavy.

DM: So what other kind of work after the construction did you do? Tell us about the other work that you did.

DSM: From there locally, let me just say to finish up these things ... I used to work for the China man, Mr Hong, there at Meyerton – being a clerk, being a man driving his truck selling everything, running for the whole place there. People were buying and within certain days this side that day, this side that day, is where I used to work for a longer time. Then I was a principal that the China man has to give me the numbers and I must go and pull *fafe* (numbers) for the people. I'm on his car giving me he used to have new cars driving to go to Henly on Klip, Daleside, Thabeng tsa Manong pulling *fafe* there. I'm there just to give the people the number, taking the bag of money just like that and then going back. He is there to look and check and pay the people. Something else now at Residentia should I tell what Residentia is now.

DM: Ok just before you do that let's just move forward a bit. What made you come to this area – Residentia when you moved ... what brought you here and your family here?

DSM: We wouldn't know, we were just told that we have got to move from Meyerton to come here. And we were offered R300 per house although it was build at your house with face bricks or whatever it is. We were just given R300 to move from that place and leave. You leave the house as it is, you just take the things inside the house ... zincs, windows everything, you are just leaving it like that.

DM: So were you forcibly removed?

DSM: Yes I had to leave my house as it is the windows, roof everything.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): Who told you to leave?

DSM: The superintendent of the place at that time.

AV: What happened to the people who didn't take the money and didn't want to leave?

DSM: It was a matter of must move, we had to move. Although they never wanted to move but there was a matter of must to move there. Then there used to be a certain rondovel house - that house was left there while other people, you know how people there are some taking their zincs, whatever. And that house, inside that house there was a three footed pot - a small one in the middle of that house. You will find in that pot there is mealies inside, it is cooking ... and then that house, it was the house that was left, I don't

know how did they abolish that house. That house used to have its own power. No one to touch it

DM: So when you were forcibly moved to here to Residentia you said earlier that you were moved into council houses, is that right?

DSM: Yes, there were council.

DM: And what did you do once you started living here ... what kind of work did you start doing when you lived here in Residentia?

DSM: I was a Vaal bus driver. Actually not just Vaal bus driver, I used to work for Breco driving those horse and trailer, delivering the bricks - Pretoria where to, where to, been a driver delivering the bricks. And from there I worked at ceramics, you know that place, that firm they called ceramic, it's next to Breco.

DM: Yes.

DSM: I used to work there. There I used to be a fork lifter driver of which I've got to collect the sand or the mixtures of which they are making tiles with. Making it a heap as high as this house. I used to climb up to make a heap there on top and I used to work with the other white gentleman, because when going up you got to make your own way you must never go aside never. Well, I don't know when a certain misfortune that gentleman used to have - he was tipped off from the fork lifter and he was hurt. I don't know what did they give him or what happened.

AV: And what was it like compared to where you were staying before, compared to here in Residentia, which did you prefer?

DSM: Meyerton life was better because now here ... I was then called by the superintendent to come and take my title. When I came at him there, he's the man questioning me that - *jy sieker dat is jou huis hier?* But he is the man who wrote a note and the number of my house - come and take your title when I'm there to take my title he wants to know am I sure that is my house. Then we collapsed to each other because I wanted to know ... you called me and now you are there to ask me, am I sure that this is my house, then we couldn't understand each other with that superintendent even now.

DM: Ok so what happened to that? They wanted to take your house ... tell us the rest of the story about what happened to your house?

DSM: Then I went at Houtkop ... because when I came here at 19 ... I mean to say during the strike of those boys here, well you know houses were burning. They used to burn houses you know that story ... then as I was working at AECI (explosives). I worked at AECI for 14 years being a supervisor and a fork lifter driver for 14 years. Then they used to take my money from the bank because I then made certain arrangements that I am buying the house. Although that time the houses were not sold to the people, but I bought this house. They pulled my money because ... I bought a certain stand on the site with the exception of buying the stand where the house is. It was on this site. While I was supposed to get that stand it then happened that they should build new houses here ... then I had to loose that property, that site of my stand. That moment when they were putting these new houses here they rooted all the trees here, my trees, my fowl run

everything that I had. They demolished everything and then they said they are going to repair, pay back with wiring my side - they never did it, they never did it.

DM: So when did you take full ownership of this house ... when did you finally get to own this house for yourself?

DSM: The ownership?

DM: Yes when did you take ownership formally?

DSM: Ja you know there was a big struggle of which I can show you that you know what ... I am from far with this place with certain complaints you know with no tar roads, no what. They used to complain for humps on this road people are dying, cars are moving as aeroplanes this side they are killing children here, people here they are turned over the cars there ... now at the moment they are not there to put humps this side. Look I will show you something, what I used to be ... (takes out a newspaper article to show) I'm sorry you know first of all you have a look at this Sowetan. You can have a look at this one as well.

DM: This is from 1988?

DSM: Haa sometimes I don't know now.

DM: And this a picture of you?

DSM: Yes it's me, pointing at the house, the house that I was promised to have, my stand that I bought, a site stand. But I was pressed not to have it until they gave me this portion this side. This portion and a smaller portion.

DM: Ok so here they are shown building smaller houses on your plot?

DSM: Yes about 16 houses or 19 houses.

DM: They took the rest of your plot, the rest of your land?

DSM: Ja they took most of my place.

DM: And this is what you were left with, this area that you are living in now only?

DSM: Yes, I own this only.

AV: How long were you been paying for this? For how many years were you paying for the plot?

DSM: From '65

AV: From 1965 to 1988?

DSM: Buying the house ... in exception of paying the rent ... buying the house is from '84 while there was the struggle here. Buying the house, paying for the house I have got receipts, everything.

AV: Tell us a little bit about the struggle in 1984?

DSM: It was just something like that Sharpeville shootings, it was something like that because the police did not treat people in the right way. And the main point is this that

while you are having a house like this then they wanted to put ... look here, I have got my wife now, I haven't got a wife but I want to show you a story ... I have got my wife here, I have married that wife first in my place then the government brings a man to come and marry my wife ... is it possible?

AV: No.

DSM: It's not. Now the state that I am is this. I have got my stand now here ... I fixed everything alright, then the law of this place is taking the money from somebody to come and build his house here in my place ... is it right?

DM: Definitely not.

AV: No.

DSM: Is it right?

DM: No.

DSM: It's what Residentia municipality is doing it ... of which it's now still a struggle of which even now by tomorrow I can see them saying that we bought this place, I want to build my house here. The law or the moving I don't know ... the council itself is looking that they should have only their only life for money but they are disturbing our lives ... we black people, to fight each other. It is very funny because the other man, as a black man, he is told to come and build in my yard ... why does he agree to take that money? What I know, what I read now even it will happen. Even as I am here, we had a meeting there is certain somebody who is high here ... many houses are sold, many houses while you are in here, in my house, is sold already to somebody ... many, many more than 200 houses are sold out while people there are still living in their place, of which is very painful.

DM: So are saying the council has tried to sell your house now?

DSM: The council is not right. It is wrong.

DM: So that's what they tried to do?

DSM: They can do it ... I may be in the number of those people.

DM: So this thing has been going on for long time, this battle, this struggle over your land here, since maybe 20 years now almost?

DSM: From '65 to here?

DM: All the time from '65 ... almost 40 years.

DM: So Daniel tell me ... just to ask you a few other questions ... when the changes happened in 1994 and apartheid ... when Mandela became president, when there were elections...?

DSM: Ja there was a little change and of which still, still it's a lie.

DM: Tell us why it's a lie?

DSM: Still, it's a lie. There are still Europeans controlling for this present time of which they say it's freedom, still a lie. There are other whites of which they don't contact to this and we black people, we are as lambs to them because we suffered a lot.

DM: Which white people are you referring to? Tell us why you are saying that?

DSM: Alright ... remember, if you look at the side of DA, how many whites are there? You know more that 12 there are behind that particular party which is DA ... and they do want their own control. It is just why I say it's a lie, freedom.

DM: What do you think of the government since 1994, the ANC government, and what it has done for you as a pensioner?

DSM: And really I want to tell you because as I am here ... I'm still going to vote for the ANC, I'm still to go and vote for ANC, because really something has moved away. We used not to have one queue to go and bet on the horses, while at the banks, but now today, it's free. At Vereeniging - those apartheid times - while walking on the street the white man is just there to push you like this ... unfortunately myself, while walking I go over him ... they will get fists and there was always when one white is fighting the black they all just come for nothing. They never saw what happened, but you are there to be dumped as nothing. But today really is free. I mean, I do not say that I hate the whites. I don't hate the whites, because I used to agree what the white man says. And sometimes now presently, it is wrong with our people ... while they are given work to do while there is no white man, then they sit down they don't want to do the job. But when you call a white man, a white man is a racer to them, then they stand up and work. It's another mood of which I don't know what can I say ... it's just like these people who are stealing money at the banks, robbing, I mean robbing the other people ... One thing is this - our councillor, or our policemen here, you know this passage I've got a passage here.

DM: Yes I see that.

DSM: There are guns shooting at night here why those people, they do hear, those police they do hear but they will never come and look what is taking place here. People are robbed here while they are passing. Instead of that the police, some should be on this side of the passage and some should be that side. Our telephones there are cut-off, even now this phone is not working.

DM: How long has that phone not been working?

DSM: Ooh it's more than six times they have been cutting off the line ... I don't know whether they take it under the wires. I don't know what do they take ... more than six times here around and we don't know ... I paid it yesterday. After repairing this I will find that my phone is owing. What happened to that amount while I was not phoning, what happened to that amount?

AV: And you were saying earlier you know this year is not freedom. What would have been freedom for you? When 1994 came, what were you expecting freedom to be?

DSM: I expected to have a good, happy life without criminals, even when I was talking about the title, when I went to Houtkop they are saying my house is on someone's stand. Look here this house, I bought this house there was nothing here - it was only the house -

these new houses they have just started to be there. But at Houtkop they are telling me that my house is on top of somebody's house, being the first house here, but now today it is built on top of somebody's house. The government has to take responsibilities on its people, no corruption and take those guns from these young boys as they have got no license. Why do they agree that they should have guns ... why? Why don't they collect all these guns from these young boys? Why this government does not do it...

DM: Are you afraid to go out of your property here, out of the property in this neighbourhood?

DSM: Am I afraid to die?

DM: Not to die, just to walk around.

DSM: Yes really I don't.

DM: You are not afraid to walk around?

DSM: Ja it's not safe ... even crossing the road at this side you will never go through, they are there to take you.

DM: So you stay here pretty much most of the time?

DSM: Christ help me, give me, throw away the stones on my way to see that somebody, to visit for somebody, God be with me and God is far, he is far, you will never see God. Just now that I am old, I have been an ox, I was not afraid.

DM: You were not afraid?

DSM: During my time, ooh I was never arrested. I don't know what a court is or custody is - I was never arrested. And I never had a kirie on my head and I never just to go to fight for somebody, but if you come to me those days then I feed you back what you wanted. But now today no, I am a lamp.

AV: A lamp what do you mean?

DSM: If I say I am a lamp - *ek is 'n klenskap* ...not a lamb, a *skap klein skap*.

AV: I want to ask you about 1994. Do you remember the elections?

DSM: Yes

AV: What can you tell me about that period and what it was like here in this area?

DSM: There is a word that says we are government, you people you are government. But if you want certain things to be done for you then you will find out that there is a higher government of which you will say no, we won't give you that thing. It's only burdening us that we are government, but we are not government, we cannot do whatever we want to, we are controlled. You know what there was a question from this one ... really it was nice because to hear that we have got to vote for Mandela and then there was, you know it came better it came better, far better. But only one thing is this now - the very same man who came after Mandela, who is he?

DM: Thabo Mbeki.

DSM: Thabo Mbeki ... you know right, he is there standing there but as to work for South Africa here he is always going out, leaving South Africa here for nothing, doing nothing for South Africa.

AV: You were saying that things did get better after 1994? So, what were your main things in your life that got better?

DSM: Ooh well is that as an old man of old age, money increase was just there.

AV: Do you mean for the pension?

DSM: Ja money for the pension and that we can walk together, we can be together in the buses, in the train ... let me remember something. At those days before Mandela, during that time when Mandela was struggling to give, to rule ... I used to go by train, to work at Breco as far as Lens ..., carriages were closed for black people, not to go number 1 carriage. The guards, the white guards, used to say - *jylle dink is Mandela se train is nie Mandela se train nie* - and the train could not wait for a minute. It used to wait on the station for few seconds and then it is pulling. The other people are falling under the rail, the shoes are left there you know ... but Mandela ruled really, there is peace on one side.

DM: How is it been for you and your family here since 1994, not just for you as an individual but for your children? How has your family fared since 1994, how would you say?

DSM: No, really life is better, life is better far better. Because even you know those days ... the apartheid time ... when I'm the owner of this place right ... if I can die at that time then this wife is driven out of this house, she has no control of this house because I as the head, I'm dead. But after that the wife used to own the house now. And then our children as girls, as wives they are given chance to rule themselves by working, doing their own jobs and so on and so on.

DM: So it's much better for women in particular, the rights of women? Is that what you are saying?

DSM: Yes really we are pushing forward. If only you people could do or fight for, death should not be there.

DM: Is your wife still alive, is your wife still with you?

DSM: My wife passed away long ... and I think I have got about 6 children who died. The other one was shot dead by a boy and that case it was just thrown away, my daughter in law was just shot ... the boy came at night here, at about 8 o'clock in the evening. From that time I couldn't see ... even now I'm better because I went for operation and so on and so on. He was at the gate and he called the other girl here ... please call that girl in the house to come to me ... that girl said no, go for yourself, go and call her. (He said) 'no man, I have got a present to give her in my hand, please call her' ... the girl said 'give me the present, I will go in the house and give this lady the present', (but) he refused and the poor girl came and objected this little to go out with her. Right, it's so sorrowful that I still remember looking at the heels of my younger daughter going out, looking this at the door because I was sitting there in the passage. When she went out it was my last look at her while she was walking out. Alright I and the old lady we are waiting that she will

come back, she will come back. It's already 8 o'clock and the child is not coming back. Well by a day, tomorrow, the child is not back. We were looking for the child, a month we couldn't know where she is, a month long. After that connection with this other gentleman, a policeman Mr. Mokwena, there came another police to Mr Mokwena having his files. Then Mr Mokwena said, 'please let me see what is this' ... looking at the names he found the name that we have reported, that the daughter disappeared, we reported to Mokwena. How, what happened? No, I'm taking this boy to custody because he has killed the daughter, this daughter. Hey man, I've been looking for this daughter ... it went to court, let me tell you it went to court, but then the magistrate said we want a man or a witness that has seen the fellow shooting at that time. Then the case was dropped.

DM: Sorry about that.

AV: And when did this happen?

DSM: Ooh, it's about 6 years back now.

DM: (Changing the tape) Ok Daniel I was just going to ask ... you said your wife passed sometime ago and you also had 6 children that also passed away, is that correct?

DSM: Ja that right.

DM: You still have 3 children still with you, that are alive?

DSM: No, I have got daughter in laws, I have got only two daughters in laws here with me in the house. This one is schooling at Pretoria high school, you know I must take ... I must always help with money, travelling. And this other one with her. she is with me - I have got to see that I must buy things for her and she has an instalment (credit bureau) and I had to pay every month 200, it was 2 000 and I don't know. Can you give me chance to say something?

DM: Yes.

DSM: My wife passed away ... like let's say today ... and she was supposed to go and get her money tomorrow, the old age amount. We couldn't get that amount, we struggled for that amount - I went to Houtkop, Vereeniging we couldn't get that money. I have got a letter here and then even now I have got a letter here saying I've got to pay that money, that money has been taken out by a family of Masemola and they are now drawing R100 from my wage - this will be the third time to draw my amount of R100 and I never had that money. But they say I must pay that money because it's drawn out of the bank. And at that moment they said to me, this lady, a white lady there at Houtkop, she said to me and my daughter - while she was alive that daughter of mine - *as jy dood is julle kry nie die geld.* But it happened that now they are querying and they are mastering that I must pay that money and I'm paying that money monthly R100, R100 - is it right people?

DM: It doesn't sound right to me no.

DM: Who are you dealing with, what department do you deal with, the department of social development?

DSM: Yes there for a social grant, but the one who wrote the letter is in Houtkop. I wonder where is that letter? He is in Houtkop, the one that made me to pay per month.

Because she said when I'm going for the lawyers I'm going to spend more, so rather I must just pay that amount. And she is not giving me a receipt - it's only a deduction on my pay slip.

DM: Do you get any support other than your pension?

DSM: Nothing.

DM: Nothing else?

DSM: Nothing.

DM: So you are living off your pension alone?

DSM: Ja, on my pension.

DM: How do you find it to keep up with the things that you need and to support? Do you find it very difficult now or is it ok?

DSM: Can I tell you that right now I have got not even 10c in my pocket. Even in the house now I am waiting for the month to go, to get to an end. I've got no sugar I've got nothing in the house here.

DM: So all of it is already gone?

DSM: The children are married. They are there and the son in law is at the college. The son of the daughter that passed away is at Pretoria College. They are always ...I must pay R2000 from my wages, R300 and so on and so on. Then I sometimes have to leave, maybe like tomorrow ... my daughter or my son ... because my son is at Qwa Qwa, the other daughter is at Pretoria, the other one is at Botswana. They sometimes sent me money, they might send R20 or so

DM: So it's very difficult?

DSM: Life is difficult.

DM: When you look at you now are an elderly man and you were talking about death earlier on ... when you look at the future, I mean when you look at the next few years, I know that might be difficult to do, to look in to the future but when we are alive we must look into the future, is that not right?

DSM: Ja you know what life is ... as long as sometimes when I wake up there is no pains in my body or a certain worry from somebody that is disturbing me or I myself have disturbed somebody ... I live without such things, not to disturb somebody and actually most of the time there is no one disturbing me, then I'm free and then I drink water.

DM: So as long as you can keep going you will keep going?

DSM: Yes I will keep going, as long as I'm still breathing in and out.

DM: Daniel, is there anything that you would specifically like to tell us that we haven't asked a question about?

DSM: Alright, first of all, if you've got power, I want humps this side. While I am crossing the roads to see the other people that side I don't see cars. Three months back, I was crossing the road and there was a pothole that tripped me and then I fell. Then the car came past in front of my head at same time while I was still lying on the road. It is just why really I'm not feeling good ... why are they not putting the humps on this road, why, why don't they? They say they are dear, are they dearer than somebody's soul, to loose your child, to loose your wife? Those humps - they are just concrete and cement - to put there to make humps. Are they dearer than a human being? They are not, isn't it? If you can push that thing here.

DSM: I would like you people to tell me if I have hurt you, for something I have talked bad about?

AV: No.

DM: No, not at all. In fact you talked about freedom; I think one of the biggest freedoms is the freedom to say what you wanted to say and not feeling like you are going to hurt someone ... there is nothing that you have said, that has hurt anything.

AV: More importantly, you schooled us. You have taught us a lot.

DM: So I wanted to ask you Daniel we are going to come back for another round of talking people ... we want to do more in-depth, a longer interview. Would you be willing to tell us more stories?

DSM: Maybe, you know I didn't know for what you are coming here for ... but now I may prepare myself you know, to see what future could be and so on and so on.

DM: I think we might be contacting you at the later day to come and spend more time with you.

AV: Maybe we will spend the entire day and you will tell us the whole story from the beginning.

DSM: The one thing is this. You should let me know before time and date and time to be in, if you said 10h00 it must be 10h00. But I can have a certain excuses and you can also have certain excuses while I'm here at 10h15. And what I can say to you is I'm sorry I couldn't have sugar I could make tea for you.

AV: No.

DM: No, no, no, that's fine

DM: Thank you very much for talking with us and giving your time, thank you.

DSM: Thanks.

MINUTES - 69:19