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### **INTERVIEW WITH AMELIA MAVUSO.**

**Dale McKinley (DM):** First thank you very much for agreeing to talk to us, we appreciate your time. Even though you just said it we need to capture it on the tape ... if you can just tell us your full name and where you live here?

**Amelia Mavuso (AM):** My name is Amelia Mavuso. I live here at Sebokeng.

**DM:** Were you born here in Sebokeng?

**AM:** No.

**DM:** Where were you born?

**AM:** At Free State.

**DM:** Where in the Free State?

**AM:** Caledonia.

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

**AM:** Plus/minus 18 years.

**DM:** Ok so you grew up in Caledonia?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** Was it a small little town?

**AM:** Yes too small.

**DM:** Too small?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** And what were your parents doing there?

**AM:** It was only my mother and my father who were staying here at Sebokeng.

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

**AM:** I have my young brother and my young sister.

**DM:** So you are the eldest?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** And what year were you born?

**AM:** 1981.

**DM:** So, did you like growing up in that place in Caledonia, Free State?

**AM:** No.

**DM:** No, why not?

**AM:** It's a small town, which is tired, and everything that you want you have to suffer to get it.

**DM:** So when you were growing up with your mother was there a struggle to get the things that you needed?

**AM:** It was difficult. It started when I came here to visit and I realised that there is a difference when I compare here and back there I noticed that back then, life is very difficult.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** Your mum, what was she doing?

**AM:** She was not working.

**AV:** And you're Dad?

**AM:** He was working at SAMANCOR.

**AV:** And would he send money every month to the Free State?

**AM:** Yes.

**AV:** And your dad, where was he staying here in Joburg, Gauteng?

**AM:** He was staying at his brother's house in Zone 12.

**AV:** When you moved up from the Free State you were 18. Why did you move here to Joburg, to Gauteng?

**AM:** We moved from Free State after my father got the job at SAMANCOR and afforded to buy a house - then we moved with him.

**AV:** And in the Free State, who's house were you staying in?

**AM:** We were staying at my father's family.

**DM:** Just to go back to your childhood. How was the schooling for you in that little Free State town ... primary and secondary school?

**AM:** I did only primary schooling there.

**DM:** You only did the primary schooling there?

**The interpreter:** Yes

**DM:** And you didn't go on to high school?

**AV:** I did my high school here in Gauteng.

**DM:** When you came here having lived there ... how did you find coming into this big place Sebokeng, this different area here?

**AV:** Even if I was young but what I can say is that life was not the same, and life in general is different from here. Here you cannot suffer for something for a long time. There you need to wait until the pay day for your parents to buy you what you want but here it is better.

**AV:** For you yourself personally, what was the best thing about moving to Gauteng?

**AM:** In Free State there is lack of resources, there were no libraries and we were travelling long distances, kilometres, to school walking and there was no transport to school. So here we are closer to school even if when school is far it's better because you walk inside the community, you pass people, while back there you could walk on a mountain for more than 30 minutes alone without transport.

**AV:** What was the worst thing about moving to Gauteng?

**AM:** In Gauteng life is a competition, everyone is competing. If someone has done something and even though you know that you can't compete, people still compete and end up in debt.

**AV:** Give us an example of what you mean?

**AM:** For instance, if you go to school and see others wearing something that you can't afford some of the children drop out of school saying others are laughing at them. Some even commit suicide.

**DM:** If you were born in 1981, by the time when things began to change in the country you were about 12/13 years old, you were a youngster. What do you remember about that period for yourself there when the politics in the country began to change in the early '90s. Was there anything that changed in your life?

**AM:** I don't remember anything because I've never seen what it was like before.

**DM:** In 1994 you were 13 years old, do you recall '94, when people voted for the first time?

**AM:** I think during the apartheid era it was better. Most everyone was working, even if they were getting lower salaries ... if you can work hard you knew what you were going to get. These days there is no job even if you have gone to school. If you need a job you are supposed to buy it. Where can we find the money to buy the job because we don't work?

**DM:** When you came here in Gauteng and you went to high school ... when did you finish your high school?

**AM:** I finished high school in 1999, matric, here in Sebokeng Tshepo Temba.

**DM:** What was your favourite subject? What were you studying and what did you want to be doing once you got your matric?

**AM:** I did History, Biology and Home Economics. The subjects that I studied did not match what I wanted to do. When we came in Std. 7 they chose the subjects for us and I saw History, Biology and Home Economics, but they were not balanced.

**DM:** What is it that you wanted to do? What kind of courses did you want to take?

**AM:** The subject that I wanted was Biology, Maths and Physics.

**DM:** And you are saying you were not allowed to take those things you weren't able to do that?

**AM:** Its not like I didn't do them because of school. I liked them but they were difficult for me and the educators were not good.

**DM:** Ok so when you got your matric, what did you think that you are able to do, what did you go try to do? Did you go try to find a job?

**AM:** My father was willing to take me to the Vaal Tech but at that same time my mother started to be sick so I had to sit down to take of her. Because at the same time, my father was also sick. There was no one to take care of them so I had to sit down and take of them.

**DM:** Your father was still working at SAMANCOR at that time?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** Was he retrenched as well with a lot of the other workers?

**AV:** At first he was out because of his sickness, but later he was called back and that's where he came out when people were retrenched.

**DM:** What kind of sickness was your father suffering from?

**AM:** He was mentally disturbed.

**AV:** And you're mum?

**AM:** Heart attack.

**DM:** Ok so when you were unable to go and study at Vaal Tech ... you said that you spent most your time taking care of your parents at that point?

**AM:** Yes because my mother died in 2000. I took care of her until her death. After her death my father also was very sick by the time I thought I would go back to school. So, I thought I can't go back to school.

**AV:** How was it for you to have to look after your two parents?

**AM:** It was difficult because I was also looking after the last born and he was still young. I had to prepare them for the school. Even when school is out, I had to take and fetch them in Zone 7 and it was a long distance. At the same time I was looking after my parents. I was always busy without time to relax.

**DM:** So also your younger brother and your sister you were, more or less, having to take care of them as well?

**AM:** Yes.

**AV:** And at the time when your dad was ill was he earning any money from SAMANCOR?

**AM:** Yes.

**AV:** And how were you guys coping financially at the time? Was it easy to cope financially with the money that your dad was getting from SAMANCOR?

**AM:** Yes we were managing with it.

**DM:** And your father then passed in 2003 is that right?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** I know it must have been very difficult to lose both your parents at such an early age but when your father passed, what did you think that you were going to do at that point? You had the house so how did you look at the future? .... (Please take your time and if you don't want to answer any questions, just tell us okay). We are just trying to get a sense of how it was for you after your parents passed and how it was for you, picking up from that point?

**AM:** When my mother passed away, my father was influenced by the family members to chase us away from this house and we left.

**DM:** Sorry when you are saying chased ... who chased you away?

**The interpreter:** Her father.

**DM:** Chased who away?

**The interpreter:** The children.

**DM:** You were kicked out of the house?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** How long was this before your father passed?

**AM:** My father was still alive because my mother died in 2000 and then we were chased in 2001.

**DM:** Where did you go?

**AV:** I went to Ficksburg, to my mother's family.

**DM:** Also with your brother and sister?

**AV:** Yes.

**DM:** And how long did you stay there?

**AM:** 2001 - 2003.

**DM:** You stayed for 2 years?

**AM:** 3 years.

**DM:** 3 years?

**AM:** Yes.

**AV:** So you weren't here when your father passed on, you weren't living in Gauteng?

**AM:** Yes I was still there at Free State.

**AV:** And then did you move up after he passed on?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** So when moved to Ficksburg in the Free State, what did you do there for that time?

**AM:** It was difficult because at my granny's place there, everyone had to look after his/her family, their own children. Then I realised that even me, I have to look after my siblings. I started to look for a job but it was difficult to find a job.

**DM:** Did you manage to find some work there?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** What did you do?

**AM:** I was sewing tracksuits and t-shirts for the company called Callies clothing. I also sewed for shops like Jet and Mr Price.

**DM:** Were you on contract or permanent?

**AM:** It was temporary for 6 months and after that I was hired on permanent basis.

**DM:** How were the wages and conditions for working there?

**AM:** The salary was not that much. It was just to support my siblings so that they could go to bed without an empty stomach.

**DM:** When you moved, your father passed and then you moved back?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** And was there agreement within the family that you move back in to the house, is that what happened? Or where did you move when you came back here?

**AM:** After we heard that my father had passed away they couldn't bury him because they couldn't withdraw his money from the bank because it was under my name. So that's why we came back.

**DM:** So it sounds to me, from what you are telling me, that there was somewhat of a conflict over who was going to inherit your father's pension and house?

**AM:** Yes, like this same house, the relatives wanted to take it.

**DM:** By the relatives?

**The interpreter:** Yes.

**DM:** That must have been very difficult to deal with relatives who wanted to take something away from you. When you came back here did you feel as though in some ways you were reclaiming what was your family's and yours?

**AM:** I was not happy to come back because we had to live near the very same people that chased us away, I was not comfortable and did not feel safe.

**DM:** So you've now been back for 3 years now yes?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** Have you had any further problems with your relatives about the house or anything else?

**AM:** After my father passed away it was in the middle of the year, so I was working for my siblings in Ficksburg. I asked one of the relatives to take care of the house until December when we come back because if I were to be at the house, no one would be there to look after my siblings back in Free State until the year end. When we came back (to Sebokeng) the person that we left here thought we are chasing her away and it was a fight for her to move because she was claiming that she owns the house.

**DM:** So did you manage to remove the relative from the house?

**AM:** I sat down with her and told her that I just asked her to look after the house for the couple of months. Now that we are back, she must move out. She was not happy and even now she is still angry at me and she doesn't talk to me.

**DM:** But is the relative still in the house?

**The interpreter:** No.

**AV:** And so when you came back to Joburg did you start looking for work again?

**AM:** Yes I looked for the job and I got one at Three Rivers Mall, at Ackerman's.

**AV:** And your siblings, what were they doing now?

**AM:** The boy who is after me passed Std. 10 in 2003 and he passed very well. But he can't get a job and there is no money to further his studies. The last born, a girl, is doing Std. 8 in Tshepo Temba.

**AV:** And they are both staying with you?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** The job that you are working at here, at the Three Rivers, is that how you are supporting yourself and your siblings?

**AM:** No, it was a temporary job for December.

**DM:** So how do you support your brother and sister?

**AM:** My uncle – my father's brother - he is the one who sometimes buys us food.

**DM:** And is there any money that comes from SAMANCOR as a result of your father's work there?

**AM:** While my father was ill and the time he was retrenched, he got a package. He misused the money ... as I said, he was mentally disturbed. They even stole some of the furniture and with the little money that was left, I bought a few things for the house that I could afford.

**DM:** And no pensions, no payouts because of your mother/father's death?

**AM:** No.

**DM:** Nothing like that?

**AM:** No.

**DM:** I'm assuming that you find it quite difficult to keep things moving here with yourself and your brother and sister. Is it difficult for you?

**AM:** Yes too much.

**DM:** Are you still looking for work?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** What kind of work are you looking for?

**AM:** I did a security course so it is the only one where I can get the job. But if you want a job, you have to buy it and I don't have the money to buy the job while I'm not working.

**DM:** Do you every think of going back to your grandmother's place in Ficksburg, leaving here?

**AM:** It's better to stay here so that my siblings can have a place to call their home. If we go to our grandmother's then if she can pass away and leave us, her children are still staying there and they could chase us away.

**DM:** Have you attempted to get support for your brother and sister, from any of the government departments as children who have no parents and are struggling?

**AM:** I went for the foster care grant but by the time I went the boy was already 18 and they told me he doesn't qualify. I registered for the girl and they did give her money while I was in Ficksburg and she was staying with my sister in Botshabelo. They asked me where she is and I told them she is in Botshabelo and they cancelled it and say she would open it in Botshabelo. The following year we came here and I applied for the foster grant. Only last month did I get registered and they say it will take 3 months to be processed ... that's when they answered me, from 2004.

**DM:** So you are waiting for that 3 months?

**AM:** Yes.

**DM:** What do you see for yourself in the future, in the next five years? What would you like for yourself, what would you like to do?



**AM:** I want to see myself working, getting a job, for my siblings so that they can forget about being orphans. If I can have enough money to support them I think they can feel like they have a parent.

**DM:** And I know that this is very, very difficult for you, but on the personal side of things are there any positive things that you have got now in your life people, friends, friends, other things that are going okay for you?

**AM:** The thing that I only enjoy is when I am with my siblings sitting and even if we sleep on an empty stomach if they are happy, I am also happy. They are the ones that are important to me and that I trust most.

**DM:** Are your brother and sister doing okay? You said your brother is still looking for a job and your sister is still in school, but when you look at their futures are things looking okay for them?

**AM:** When I look at them I think to just sit without getting a job is not good. Especially the boy, because he is no longer going to school and it is damaging his mind. He meets with different people and he ends up doing what they are doing for example, he is drinking alcohol because he is not working. It is hard for me to help since I do not have a job.

**DM:** When you look ...outside of your own life, in your own conditions ... when you look at this community and the where you live and everything, what kinds of things do you think should be happening for this community, not for just yourself but for the other people ... because I know there are other people that are in similar kinds of situation, that are struggling in different ways and many other child-headed households and young people ... what do you think should happen, particularly with the government?

**AM:** Particularly with government workers, there is this favouritism and this thing on who must employ who. If Joseph works for government then you will find that they are all Joseph's there, which means they just put themselves there. The government must tell us of the available positions and the CVs must be looked at fairly, the way they have been submitted, not by the names. They must be honest with job offerings.

**DM:** Is there anything that you want to tell us that we haven't ask you ... that you want to say for yourself about your situation?

**AM:** I wish I could get the job so that I can be able to support my siblings. I went to Houtkop and they told me that the social worker would come but I have been waiting for the social worker for four years. I want my brother to get help to further himself, he has good results for matric and he has the passion to study mechanical engineering. I wish the last born can get the foster care grant so that she can be able to attend Saturday schools and for myself if can I get a proper job so that we can live better.

**DM:** Thank you very much.

**AV:** Thank you.

**AM:** Thank you.

**MINUTES - 46:06**