

Project name: Alternative History Project
Date of interview: 2007-09-08
Location of interview: Sebokeng, Gauteng
Language of interview: Sotho
Name of Interviewer/s: Dale McKinley & Ahmed Veriava
Name of Interviewee/s: Nicodemous Khayakhole Makhanya
Name of translator: Joseph Matutoane
Name of transcriber: Moses Moremi
Audio file name: AHP_SEB_MakhanyaNicodemousKhayakhole_20070908

INTERVIEW WITH NICODEMOUS KHAYAKHOLE MAKHANYA.

Dale McKinley (DM): Ok first of all thank you very much for taking your time to talk with us we appreciate it. Can you just tell us your full name and your position ... what you are doing here?

Nicodemous Khayakhole Makhanya (NKM): I am the Archbishop of the Gold Stone Ethiopian Church, since 1994. I started this church because I want to create all the little peoples to do the right things. And from 1994 I start to begin to try. I was working before and I tried to get the side of the church but this government did not improve exactly the things ...

DM: Ok we would like to ask you more questions, if you want to speak in vernacular feel free, we have the translation. You don't have to speak in English, we can get the translation?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Were you born in this community?

NKM: Yes.

DM: And what year were you born here?

NKM: 1957.

DM: 1957?

NKM: Yes.

DM: In this area or in another different area?

NKM: In Evaton.

DM: In Evaton?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Ok, so you have lived here all your life?

NKM: Yes, all my life here.

DM: So just, before we talk about you as a Bishop, just tell us what it was like growing up in this community?

NKM: It was difficult to come to stay in this area after we have been brought here from Evaton in the 1970s. So in 1970 we stayed here in Zone 7.

DM: And your parents, what did they do here, when you were...what were they doing here?

NKM: No, my father only. He was at the TPA construction of the road.

DM: The Transvaal Provisional Administration?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Ok, I remember it. And was your father, were you in that time very much in the church, were you a religious family?

NKM: We were going to my father's church; by that time I didn't have my own church.

DM: So your father was a minister as well, in same church? What kind of church?

NKM: Yes, it was a Zion church, not this one, it was different.

DM: A different church, Zion, ZCC?

NKM: No it was Kanana in Orlando that was Zion.

DM: So when you were growing up - if you were born in 1957 - when you were growing up here in the 60s and 70, were you involved as a student in many of the troubles because here was the place where many things were going on?

NKM: Yes, in 1976 during the riots, I was involved in the student uprisings.

DM: Can you tell us anything about that, I mean did you get into trouble with the authorities, any examples?

NKM: Yes, there were people who were pointing but the police did not know or recognise me. I had to change my image like cutting my hair because they would be looking for us as the cause of the riots.

DM: And did you finish school? How far did you go, did you do matric?

NKM: I finished in standard 5.

DM: And after you left school, what did you do?

NKM: My father was a pensioner and there was no one who was working, I was supposed to leave school and get a job at Roberts where I worked, since my elder brothers were not getting jobs.

DM: Ok, so you went to work?

NKM: Yes.

DM: What did you do, what kind of work did you do?

NKM: We were building the town council hall. Town hall, cinema, we were building libraries. I was employed at Murray & Roberts construction.

DM: Like your father?

NKM: We were building.

DM: I am saying his father was also in the construction, so he was following his father's foot steps?

NKM: He was working at TPA and I got the job at Roberts construction.

DM: Were you working for the private construction?

NKM: Yes, Roberts's construction.

DM: How was it working there, how was the job, was it good for you as a young man?

NKM: It was not good just because there was nothing I can do by that time, I was supposed to work since I didn't have choice. I was going to be arrested if I didn't work.

DM: What were the conditions of that work, I mean were you treated well or badly?

NKM: It was bad, sometimes you were even thrown by the brick meaning you are not rushing, we were easily dismissed; we were forced to work in a speed rate. We were fired easily if you didn't cope with the work. They wanted us to do exactly what they wanted us to do, if you can't do it then you are dismissed.

DM: How long did you work for Roberts Construction, how many years?

NKM: For 3 to 4 years.

DM: 3 to 4 years?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Did you leave or were you fired or were you retrenched, what happened?

NKM: I left because one of the white man has fallen from the top and we did not get our money as a result.

DM: Ok and where did you go after that, what did you do?

NKM: I went to Nice Camp making explosives, in Lenasia.

DM: Making explosives?

NKM: Yes.

DM: And how long did you work there?

NKM: I stayed there for a long time because I left there in 1979 but I don't know exactly when the date was.

DM: During the 1980s what were you doing?

NKM: We were forced to pay rent even though we were not working. Therefore that's where we strike in 1984. During 1984 I was working at Cape Gate.

DM: And so what is Cape Gate?

NKM: It's a firm that makes metals.

DM: During the rent boycotts and the uprising here, were you living in this, here where you are now, in this place?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Tell us about that time, what was it like for you during that time?

NKM: In 1984 during the riots, I had to come here to protect my children from the police. At least I had an idea of how the riots work. The following day when I was going to work, we had to sign warning letters and we were fired. They said we have just left the jobs without permission. That's when we started having problems with the new government.

DM: What do you mean when you are saying another problem; tell us what do you mean about that?

NKM: Our new government promised to do things differently from the old government, but nothing happened.

DM: Ok, we will talk about that, but in the 1990s when things started changing, you know when Mandela was released and ANC was unbanned and the PAC was unbanned, as someone who had been involved in some of the struggles, how did you feel at that time?

NKM: I felt happy and thinking that things will start to change, be right.

DM: When you say right, what did you think that meant for you?

NKM: I thought the government was going to be a national government, everybody to have a decent life whereby each and everyone of us can be free, do what I want to do, and that's why I decided to build a church in order to keep children away from the street. I wanted life to be easier for old ages because after drinking, they fight. I wanted to reduce crime rate, stop child abuse make youth involved in activities (such as choirs) that will help them have a better life. And for the children not to be abused. But, it is very hard because the government is not willing to help me build the church. I thought government will help me build the church and protect sinners from going to hell. However the government is denying that.

DM: So do you - this is interesting - you had expectations in the 90s that the government was going to help you build your own church?

NKM: Yes, I expected the government to help me to build a church in order to help people and sinners not to go to hell. I now found the stand, they made me pay R500 but now they are denying me the land and they are saying I should pay another R500 and I have proof that I bought the stand. Since I am not working now, I don't have power to

build the church. Since 1995 I am unemployed. I find temporary jobs where I help constructor to build. From 1995 July 5, I never worked.

DM: Since 1995?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Since 1995 you haven't got work, is that what you are saying, a formal job?

NKM: I have never got a formal job, but what I got is when somebody who is building can come and ask me to help him.

DM: So up until 1995 were you still working there?

NKM: I was working at the Cape Gate, but since from 1995 July 5 I am unemployed

DM: When you lost your job there was it because you were retrenched?

NKM: They knew and noticed that I was active in riots, and then they put a trap so that they can fire me. They told me why do I leave the job and go to the toilet and the machine that I was working with rolled over the wire and that was a mistake, and they told me I cannot leave without giving notice to the boss. We had an argument and they called me to hearing, where we misunderstood and then that's when I resigned.

DM: How did you feel after 1994, new South Africa, 1995 that the year you get fired just because you were an activist and you were doing all of this, how did that make you feel?

NKM: I was hurt, because when we were negotiating about wage increase, we had to strike and by that time they took us a video and that's when they saw that I was a leader of those people.

DM: Were you a member of the union?

NKM: Yes, I was part of NUMSA.

DM: You were with NUMSA?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Were you a shop steward?

NKM: I was general chief marshal.

DM: When you were fired how did the union ... did the union support you?

NKM: NUMSA did not stand for me; I just stand for myself.

DM: Did you try to contest your firing?

NKM: I tried and I went to them in Veerining to contest but the union and the company were against me. No one was willing to listen and stand by me.

DM: The union was against you?

NKM: Yes, it seems there was something that they talked about me.

DM: So that might have made you quite angry at that time?

NKM: It did hurt me because I knew that as I stood I did not have power. Even my co-workers were not willing to stand by my side.

DM: So I want to ask you Pastor ... you started by talking about what I will call values, more of human values - about taking care of people, people acting more properly and all these things that you are talking about. Now, your experiences here on the other side people not helping each other, no solidarity even in the new South Africa, democracy ... so did that push you further into the church to do things in the church?

NKM: The church has helped me a lot, because after the ill-treatment that I have faced, I could have committed suicide. I named this church the God Stone is the stone of God in order to send the message that God is the only person that can only give them strength to live. I want to teach people about the hardships that I have been through.

DM: Ok, when you were retrenched did you...is that when you started your church or did you start your church before that?

NKM: I was going to my parent's church, but in 1995 I formed this church, because the one that I used to go before was not mine it was for my parent's church. After 1994 I took advantages and independence.

DM: Tell us...you said God-Stone Ethiopian Baptism Church?

NKM: Yes, God-Stone Ethiopian Baptism Church.

DM: Can you explain what is the God-Stone Ethiopian Baptism Church that you are talking about?

NKM: I mean God is a stone.

DM: God Stone?

NKM: Yes, God is like a stone, he doesn't move or change. He baptised us with the holy spirit on earth, that's why we are united. That's why I call this church God-Stone.

DM: Is this the only one or are there others or is it yours that is unique?

NKM: Yes, there are some Baptist churches around. But this one is the only Baptism. There are many others, but this is the breakaway from the old one.

DM: Why the breakaway, what is the difference for your church?

NKM: It is different because I myself want to teach people about what I really know, not through vicarious experiences but my own experiences. I want people to know about the struggles that I went through.

DM: Ok, when you started your church in 1995, did you start here in your home?

NKM: I started here in my house.

DM: How did you get people to come to your church?

NKM: I was going through the townships and preaching in terms of revivals. I was not forcing people to come. Even people from different churches like ZCC, come and they understood the way I put the word of God.

DM: And I just want to...because I have a particular interest ... my father and my parents were Baptists, that is my father in the ministries. So I am interested to know what is the message you give people ... what kind of words do you tell them?

NKM: I tell them about the Law of Joshua. Moses came from Egypt and he said that my life and my family will follow the lord, he saw everyone as his family. And when I pray I don't only pray for my church I pray for others who are not our members. That's why when I founded this church I founded it by Genesis 31:52, It says that don't cross this stone and come to me sinfully and I won't pass this stone and come to you with sins. God must stand between us.

DM: How has the reception been to you from the community, to your church?

NKM: They are two categories. Some are happy and some pretend to be happy. I tell people not to follow a human being for the church but to love God.

DM: And when you grow and are living in this community for the past years, from 1995 with your church for the past 10 years, what do you see as the main problems in this community? I mean just good and bad, the things that are good here and the things that are not good?

NKM: Even though people fight, when I come and discipline them, they understand me ... even though I don't touch them ... that what they do is not right. Some don't understand because they are drinkers, but after that day they understand what I was saying. Last week there was domestic violence between a man and a woman and the children came to tell me to calm them and on Sunday they were here to humble themselves to God. The fight is over. I just thank the power of God and the strength that he gave me to lead these people.

DM: So when you look, when you visit people, go around this community ... you said earlier that you don't think the government has done things, they haven't kept their promises. Can you speak to what is it that you see around you with regard to people's lives ... you know, like education, like health, like the basic services, all of these kinds of things? What is your perspective as a pastor who ...goes around in this community?

NKM: Government has done nothing in my church and I don't know of the other churches. In my church government has not even started doing anything. Government has built clinics and schools. Even though the staff does not really help the people in terms of approaching the patients. I do visit to the hospitals and clinics and I could see that these people are sick but without help. For example, when you get to the hospitals, people die on the chairs because of lack of special attention. They even discharge very sick people. And you can see the patient is very sick but no special attention.

DM: When you are saying different in approaching patients what do you mean by that?

The interpreter: He is speaking about the servants, the workers.

DM: What is...give us some examples?

NKM: It's like when you arrive at the hospital there are people who are injured with accidents you find that they have been waiting and when you look at that person, some

even die on the chair. Some are brought very sick and they will just give them pain pills and discharge them.

DM: And do you think as a pastor, as a man of the church, what do you... Since 1995, I am trying to think of the proper word to use but the way in which the society has moved, the kinds of things that are important to people, what they consider to be important in their lives. How do you think of that when you look at the children of today and the way they ... the things that they desire and want to live?

NKM: Government still is pressuring us on Masakhane. Government is forcing us to pay rents for Masakhane, how can we pay Masakhane if we are not working, I feel like government is creating thugs in our community because it forces people who are not employed to pay rent. People engage in criminal activities not by choice. In my church, I let the criminals come to my church and I teach them about humanity and selflessness.

DM: For you in the church as a minister, first let me ask you this question ... Now that you have had the church for over 12 years, how big is your congregation now?

NKM: I have a lot of people who can make 200 to 300 people and when we went to a conference in November I found out that we had more than those who left with the other pastor.

DM: And you as a pastor, how do you survive, I mean do you get a stipend or a living allowance for being a pastor?

NKM: No, a lot of people are not working in my church, so they fail to offer me a stipend. However, my wife is the only one who is working.

DM: So your wife works?

NKM: Yes.

DM: What does she do?

NKM: My wife is a sister at an old age home.

DM: Old age home?

NKM: Yes.

DM: And you also had children as well?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Do you have daughters?

NKM: I have two daughters, but the elder one is missing when she was 7 years and I have reported her but no one has found her, since 2000 on the 7th March. And I have reported her to the police station but up to now they did nothing.

DM: Sorry that's very sad, your daughter ... what's her name?

NKM: Duduzile.

DM: And I see that she (other daughter) got a diploma at the Sedibeng College?

NKM: Yes.

DM: But you are saying she is not working?

NKM: Yes.

DM: What jobs has she been trying to get?

NKM: She is trying to apply a lot and here are her CVs, and last week she went to an interview and they said they will call her on Friday but they didn't.

DM: Why do you think it is hard to get a job now, why is it so hard?

NKM: It is because of privatisation, government sold its firms. Before we had options even though we were not paid well. And the law was very hard on things like trespasses.

DM: When you are saying privatisation what do you mean?

NKM: Government sells off its firms to subcontractors. For instance, SAMANCOR, ISCOR and Cape Gate. As a result, people are retrenched because the company has been owned by someone else and all over are contractors inside firms.

DM: And after...as someone who worked many years, what do you think the government should be doing?

NKM: I was thinking my daughters and sons will get the job because they have studied further than us as their parents. Now my daughter has done government CVs.

DM: So it is most important, as you said, for people to be able to work?

NKM: Yes.

DM: Why do you think it is so important for people to work?

NKM: There will be unity. Murder, house breaks and attacks will be eliminated. It is very hard to walk at night because they (thugs) need money, they are hungry, and they hijack cars because they are hungry and when you ask they tell you it is because they are hungry. If people had jobs, crime will be minimized. This is because of poverty.

DM: So it is poverty ... that's what you are saying, the lack of jobs?

NKM: Yes, lack of jobs cause hunger.

DM: Have you, in last ten years, experienced crime yourself as a pastor here in your community ... ?

NKM: Yes, I once met them. I was from work and I had R500. I went to Johannesburg with a train and I was going to deposit some of the money but I didn't reach Johannesburg with it since they pointed with a firearm at me in toilet and took the money in my pockets ... they attacked and they got everything from me.

DM: And someone just held you up and took it?

NKM: They took it by force while I was in the toilet.

DM: In the toilet?

The interpreter: Yes.

DM: Ok just a few more questions and then we will wrap up. How do you think now ... it's 13 years after 1994, it's 2007 ... how do you feel about the last 13 years for yourself and for your community?

NKM: From this community I think life has never met my expectations, has not changed. It is very hard for cars to move around because roads are not well constructed. During funeral ceremonies it is very hard for cars to move around. They have promised to change but nothing has changed. In other new townships, things have improved.

DM: What is your opinion ... why do you think that things are not happening as you are saying?

NKM: Our local officials are the ones who have problems because the government gives them money but at the end of the day they do nothing. They convince the government that they can do for the community, but nothing is happening. Mbeki and Shilowa have never visited this Zone 7 place because they used to be a fight in this area when one of the comrades was brutally killed. They rather go to zone 6. There is a tombstone for those who were killed; the ministers sometimes come just for two hours without giving us any notice. They only visit the tombstone for 2 hours.

DM: Do you feel that this community has been discriminated against ... is that what you are saying?

NKM: Yes, because Shilowa has been around to Zone 3 during the Women's day last month, but he never came here.

DM: Ok just one last question pastor. If you were looking in the next 5 to 10 years what do you see for yourself and for this community?

NKM: If I can manage to find helping hands to help me build the church, I believe people will leave corrupt life and come to church and listen to the word of God. Place like church can be used to a lot of different activities. I want to help people to have a suitable dwelling for people who attend funerals, when people have a wedding and community meetings will be happy if someone offers to help me since the government has failed. I would be happy in next coming years if there are some people who can help and god give them power to do so.

DM: Pastor thanks very much for the time.

NKM: Thank you.

DM: One last thing. I think we forgot to ask your full name in the beginning and your surname, just to say it for the record, so that we can put it on the tape?

NKM: I am Nicodemous Khayakhulu Makhanya, I am staying here 10062, Mmaloi street, Zone 7b Sebokeng.

DM: Ok thanks very much.

NKM: Thanks.

MINUTES 1:31:08