



**Daisy Bara interviewed by Koni Benson, New
Crossroads, Apr. 26, 2005**

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Mrs. Daisy Bara, interviewed by Koni Benson, translation Nomakhwezi

Dlaba, April 26, 2005, New Crossroads

Mrs. Bara: I am Daisy Bara. I'm from the homeland of Ciskei in a town called Alice. I stayed with both my parents and we were a family of seven – three boys and four girls. I was the fourth one. The village I was at was a bit backward because there were few schools and where my mother was born, there were a lot of schools. So my mother decided to let me grow with her brother who was a teacher. So I grew up there.

Koni: Where was that?

Bara: It was also in Alice but in another village. I grew up there until I fell pregnant and I gave birth to a boy by the name of Thozama. I moved back to my home and I stayed there for...

Koni: How old were you?

Bara: I was seventeen. I went back to my home and I stayed there for six months. After six months, my brother who was working in Cape Town asked me to come and live with him because at that time I was doing standard six. I stayed with my brother for about a year and I went back to home to do standard seven, eight and nine. At that time it was called form 1, form 2 and form 3. I passed form 3 and after that I went back to Cape Town to find work because my parents were poor. They didn't take me to school that time because they had to pay a lot of money. My brother asked me to come and stay with him after I passed standard eight to find work. So I looked for work.

Koni: Where did you stay when you first came to Cape Town?

Bara: I stayed with my brother.

Koni: Where?

Bara: In Gugulethu at NY 65 No. 3. I stayed there and I worked in a shop. After two years, I went back to Ciskei to a Training School to do a teachers' course. I did the training for two years and I came back to Cape Town again to my brother. There was a conflict between my brother and his wife and they divorced. At that time my brother (was cheating) had a girlfriend. He flew to Crossroad with the girlfriend. He said to me that I couldn't stay with his wife because he is no longer in love with her so he said he would take me to Crossroad. At that time I had a teacher's certificate but I couldn't get a job because there was too much apartheid. There was this Pass Law and if you were from the homelands and you were not born here, you were not allowed to teach in the townships. So I went to stay in Crossroad and I got pregnant with my daughter and I gave birth while I was in Crossroad in December 1976.

Koni: What kind of house did you stay in?

Bara: I was staying in a shack with my brother.

Koni: So did your brother build the shack?

Bara: My brother had a shack there with his girlfriend and they took me from Gugulethu to stay with them because he was separated with his wife. So I stayed there with my brother and in 1977 my homeboy came to the shack and told me that there is a school but they are trying to collect kids. It was not a school because there were no schools at that time. So they built a big shack for the children to be educated. They knew that I had done a teacher's course so they took me there. There was a woman there by the name of Nomangesi and the late Mrs. Peter who were teaching there. So I was the third one to teach. I taught there for four years.

Koni: Did you get paid?

Bara: No we were paid the homens because the school was not registered and we were sponsored but I forgot the people who sponsored us. But the

government did not pay us.

Koni: What was teaching like?

Bara: We were teaching in the same hall and it was overcrowded.

Maybe I was teaching a hundred kids. It was chaos but we did manage to teach.

Koni: What happened at the school after 1980?

Bara: About the mid-1977 and 78, the community built us a big school and we named it Noxolo. Things were better now because it was built nicely with big windows.

Koni: How long did you teach at Noxolo?

Bara: From 1981 until 2000 then I got sick.

Koni: How did the school change?

Bara: Things were better because we were teaching forty pupils in a class unlike hundred and two hundred.

Koni: Did it change when the government changed?

Bara: Yes because we were getting books unlike before the children did not have books. We were sponsored with the books for the kids because the mothers were not working because there was too much apartheid. You were not employed if you did not have a pass but the time we came to New Crossroad, things were changed because everybody was permitted to work and then I was employed in a government school. The government here was paying us in New Crossroad.

Koni: So there was more change around 1981 and 1994?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: So how did you join the play?

Bara: We were a group of women. In fact, we were collected to go to a meeting and then there was a certain lady by the name of Mrs. Luke who likes to joke. She came from her house, which was not very far from the hall, She was carrying clothes saying, "Look, look people I'm going home. The Boers are chasing me

to the homelands, to the Transkei” We laughed and then everybody thought about what was going on because everyone was looking for a pass but the Boers were chasing us away saying that we should go home. We didn’t want to go home because our husbands were here. You can’t live without a husband. We said we are not going home because our husbands are here. So people were arrested for not having passes. Nomangesi and I were also arrested while we were on our way to Claremont because of not having passes.

Koni: What happened when you were arrested?

Bara: We had to pay money.

Koni: Did you have the money?

Bara: No somebody helped us because we couldn’t leave the children at school. We were teachers.

Koni: So Mrs. Luke was joking about having to go...

Bara: Yes and then others suggested that I should play the role of being a policeman, driving a van or being a Transkei woman.

Koni: And what was your part?

Bara: Mrs. Mene, Mrs. Mkondweni and I were women from the Transkei who were scared of the police van.

Koni: So you created the play?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: How did you organize to show the play?

Bara: We didn’t know it was going to be big because we were just playing but then it became something we could show it to people. They were interested. It was said because we were doing the things we know were happening to us. At that time we were oppressed by the Boers.

Koni: How did the audience react?

Bara: They liked it because it was sad. Sometimes we would go to

East London, Johannesburg in fact all over the country showing them our how we are staying in Cape Town.

Koni: Was it different when you did it in each place? How was it different in East London? Was the audience different in each place?

Bara: No.

Koni: Like was one place a township and one place a white audience?

Bara: We were doing this in the townships. Other places also experienced the same problem that we had because they were also arrested for not having passes.

Koni: These are copies of photos that Jossette had.

Bara: Show me. This is Mrs. Mkondweni, Mrs. Mene and I. We are the others? This is Mrs. Mapisa and Nomangesi. I was staying with this one. It's me and I was pregnant with my second child, Brenda. This is the Noxolo Hall where we created this play. This is our school the better school than the shack one. A lot of our friends have passed away. Four of them have passed away. I'm so funny

Koni: There's more. There's a stack of photos.

Bara: Where?

Koni: At Jossette's house. I'm trying to get the video but they took it to New York and we will all have lunch together and look at the pictures.

Bara: Ooh! I like that one Nomakhwezi.

Koni: So what's going on in the picture? What was happening in the play?

Bara: I forgot. This is Nomangesi and Mrs. Peter. It would be fine if we can be together and remind each other because I can't remember now unless Mrs. Mene and Mrs. Mkhondweni are here. It was a long time ago. What's going on here?

Koni: I just got the pictures yesterday.

Bara: I can't remember but it is something interesting

Koni: And how did people react to women dressing up like men?

Bara: People were laughing because we were pretending to be men because we talked like men. We were moving all over the country.

Koni: What made you to decide not to have men in the play?

Bara: Because we were only women when we did this play. Women were the ones who were chased away not to stay with their husbands.

Koni: But then were you married?

Bara: At that time I was staying with my boyfriend who impregnated me and when I moved to Crossroad I got married in 1982 gave birth to my last daughter.

Koni: So when you got this house you were married?

Bara: No.

Koni: You got it because you were a teacher?

Bara: Yes so that I must be near the school.

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Koni: So you were arguing to the government to say you have to stay in Cape Town because your husbands were here?

Mrs. Bara: Yes but it didn't help because we were arrested and they said that we must go because we are not allowed to stay here.

Koni: So then how did you get New Crossroad?

Bara: There are people who fought too much for New Crossroad but unfortunately I was not in the committee at that time. I was just a teacher because my boyfriend didn't want me to join.

Koni: Why?

Bara: I don't know why but he was very strict to me. He didn't want me to mix with other men because there were men and women in the committee. He didn't want me to be in the committee at all.

Koni: What about the play?

Bara: He did not mind about the play because he was from Gugulethu and he had to get a pass and he didn't care much about me acting in this play...because of the conflict, when we moved to New Crossroad, people were different. They were divided into halves. Others didn't want to come here because they wanted to stay in Old Crossroad. There was that conflict and the main actor, Nomangesi, was chased away from New Crossroad to Khayelitsha. It was bad.

Koni: What happened...?

Bara: I don't want to delve into that.

Koni: And Mama Yanta?

Bara: Yes both of them. You see it was a sad thing. There were main actors especially Nomangesi and Mrs. Ntongana. They were the ones who were acting more in this play and they played the serious and the saddest roles. They were showing the people what the boers were doing to us because of the passes. They [boers] can even say to a woman with no pass, "Come, Come, Come". The pictures there will just show you that it was bad.

Koni: Do you see them now?

Bara: Who?

Koni: Nomangesi and Mama Yanta.

Bara: I usually phone Nomangesi. We were both staying in the same shack but I had my own room. I did not have a number but Nomangesi had it. She was just like my landlord but when we moved here, she tried to have me my own house. That is why I am staying here.

Koni: So she helped you to get the house?

Bara: Yes she helped me a lot.

Koni: How did people get their houses? How did you get this one?

Bara: The committee took our [house] numbers to the office and then we were told that by next week we are moving. They knew people by numbers. We were divided into sections at Old Crossroad and if this section is moving, it is moving with its numbers.

Koni: Was this house how it is now when you came here?

Bara: No it was like that one in front. I renovated it when I was a teacher

Koni: How many rooms were there when you first came?

Bara: There were three rooms – a bedroom, a dining room, a kitchen and one toilet. It is still three bedrooms but I have extended the kitchen.

Koni: So did you move with your neighbors?

Bara: Yes I moved with Nomangesi and my neighbors.

Koni: So Nomangesi moved here?

Bara: Yes. Nomangesi was not staying far from me.

Koni: Was she married?

Bara: She was not married.

Koni: But she got a house?

Bara: She had a house like me.

Koni: They didn't say, "are you or are you not married?"

Bara: No they didn't say that we are not married so we can't move.

Koni: How is life different in New Crossroad than in Old Crossroad?

Bara: Here everything is expensive and in Old Crossroad we did

not have new furniture,

we had old furniture and we did not mind. But when we moved here everything was expensive. We had to buy furniture. So it was different even the people were different. When we came here they a bit high and we were in the same level in Old Crossroad.

Koni: So how did that change relationships in the community?

Bara: I don't know because we know each other but the difference was that we were staying in brick houses not in shacks.

Koni: Were the witdoekes [vigilantes] here?

Bara: The witdoekes were from Old Crossroad but I don't know what happened to them. They were killing people at KTC but I don't remember what was going on with them. My brother was shot at the time of the witdoekes.

Koni: In Old Crossroad?

Bara: Yes. I don't know much about the witdoekes because they were not killing people from Old Crossroad but at KTC.

Koni: So people were already moved here?

Bara: Yes...I don't know the whole story.

Koni: So they didn't come here?

Bara: No they did not.

Koni: Do you still know people in Old Crossroad? Were there people who stayed there?

Bara: Other people I knew were staying in Lower Crossroad but these people are new now. The people from Old Crossroad and KTC are not staying here. The most people from Old Crossroad are staying at Lower Crossroad.

Koni: Do you go there?

Bara: Yes I do. Even my brother who was from the Old Crossroad is staying here. He didn't want to move here. I do not know why. They don't want to move here because we are paying rent. There don't pay rent and even at Old Crossroad people were selling their things like vegetables, meat, tripe and so on. But here we

are not allowed to sell anything

Koni: So is life different for your daughters than it has been?

How is their life different from your life?

Bara: From Old Crossroad?

Koni: Yes.

Bara: Yes my life was different because there we were not bothered to buy furniture. We were buying the old furniture. People who sometimes gave us old clothes also sponsored us. Here we had to buy everything and also rent houses. It was different.

Koni: Were there rent boycotts here?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: Were there protests about rent?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: What happened?

Bara: If we were not renting?

Koni: With the people who were trying to protest about rent?

Bara: We stopped renting. I remember we were renting...What was funny here was that the rent here was more expensive than the rent in Gugulethu when you compare Gugulethu's residences with this house. That is the reason we decided not to rent anymore.

Koni: So what did you do? Did people get organized?

Bara: We decided not to rent anymore. We stopped renting...

Koni: When was that?

Bara: I can't remember.

Koni: And so you just stopped? There were no problems?

Bara: We stopped. I can say there were no problems because we are still here.

Koni: So you just stop renting and that was it?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: Till today?

Bara: Yes but these days there are these bills letters. For instance I owe a lot of money. These days it is expensive to rent and to pay for water and people are not working. Like me, I am not working now because of my daughter. My daughter decided not to go to school anymore and I have got three girls that are working. There is no work today. It is funny because when we were oppressed there was work and now we are free but there is no work. I don't know what is going on.

Koni: So you just have the rent bills and you don't pay them because you don't have money?

Bara: Last year I couldn't pay because my husband left me. I divorced my husband here in 1992 and I have been living alone. I'm the bread winner. I have to pay for my kids alone because my husband left me and then I couldn't pay my water. So they came to switch off my water. I went to the office for help and I told them that I am not working so they negotiated with me and told me to pay maybe a hundred rand.

Koni: And now they don't bother you?

Bara: They do bother me because the letter shows that I owe too much. I don't know where to get the money because there is nobody to help me and there is no work for my daughters.

Koni: How is your life different from your mother's life?

Bara: From my late mother's. It is difficult. You see my father used to work here and my mother used to stay at home. After two years my father had to go back to the homelands. My mother was a house wife and she couldn't work at all. I have to work for myself because my mother was not catered. So I could be like

a man as I have told you that my husband left me in 1992 and I have managed to grow up with my four kids without him because I was working. My life was different from my mother's because I could work [for myself] and my mother was a house wife waiting for money from my father who was working in Cape Town.

Koni: Did she ever come to Cape Town?

Bara: She had to come to Cape Town for three months only and because of the pass problems she had to go back. She was only given a permit for three months and then should go home.

Koni: Where did she stay when she came to visit?

Bara: She used to stay in Langa.

Koni: Did you ever go with her?

Bara: No I was staying at home with my sisters.

Koni: Do you go home now? Do you go to Ciskei or Alice?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: How often do you go?

Bara: Maybe in December for Christmas I have to go to Alice.

Koni: Who is still there?

Bara: There was my grandmother there and sometimes I used to take my uncle, my mother's brother.

Koni: Do your children go with you?

Bara: No.

Koni: Do the people there have children?

Bara: Where?

Koni: The one's staying in Ciskei?

Bara: Yes. My uncle has.

Koni: Are there young people there?

Bara: Yes.

Koni: And what is life like for young people now?

Bara: It's the same as here. Long time there was no electricity but now there is electricity. Since the ruling of this new government, everything is almost the same as here. Life here is the same as there because there is electricity there now and there are more schools and colleges. It's not like before. It's different there and there.

Koni: Are there lots of women who are the breadwinners or the heads of the house here?

Bara: Yes there are lots of them. Most women here are staying alone.

Koni: Why?

Bara: I don't know. Maybe there are more women than men because other husbands are staying with other girls.

Koni: Where?

Bara: Here. Most women are staying alone. I can count the houses where women are breadwinners.

Koni: Who do you think we can talk to if you know someone we can talk to about women and Crossroad and good people that we should interview?

Bara: Besides those who were in the play? Let me think.

Koni: Because we are interviewing people from the play...

Bara: And also from the community. Do you know Mr. Daniel? He was also in the Crossroad committee and Mr. Luthango.

Noma: We went to his house but he was not well.

Bara: Do you only want to speak to those from Crossroad? What about Mr Tshawe and Mr Ndima?

Noma: Mr Tshawe passed away. What about Mr. Ngcongolo?

Bara: I do not know Mr. Ngcongolo. You can also go to Mr. and

Mrs. Bhayana.

Noma: Mr. Bhayana also passed away.

Bara: Mrs. Bhayana was my neighbour.

Koni: Who are some of the people who are leaders in New

Crossroad? Is it the same people in Old Crossroad?

Bara: No they were not the same. You see when we came here

things changed because the people who were from Crossroad were chased away when they

came here. There are new leaders we don't know from Old Crossroad. When I was a

teacher I did not involve myself into politics because I was working with kids.

Koni: Who are the people that we can talk to who would know

about the conflict?

Bara: Mr. Daniel but people don't want to go back to what has

happened. Maybe they will tell you everything but they are scared.

Noma: Where was Girly?

Bara: Who was Girly?

Noma: The women who talked a lot.

Bara: Maybe you can talk to her. The thing is that I have never

seen other people. I have only seen them here.

Noma: Mama Mene was one of the people who were chased.

Bara: Yes.

Noma: They told her to go to Johannesburg.

Bara: No they said that she should go to Ngxobongwana. Mrs.

Mene was the one who was chased away. I remember I was teaching at Thandile primary

school and a group of young people came with hand grenades ordering her to leave. I

do not know why but she had to go to Ngxobongwana because he is the one who didn't

want to come and stay here. But she can tell you she was chased away. She is a free

person to talk to.

Noma: I think there was no reason for them to chase her away but I do not know why.

Bara: But why didn't they chase me? It was said that Mrs. Mene was having meetings with Ngxobongwana's people at night.

Noma: She did not tell us that.

Bara: She won't tell because many people were killed. Even Mrs.

Yanta was also chased with hand grenades but I didn't know why because I didn't know much about their conflict.

Koni: Did Mrs. Yanta ever move to New Crossroad?

Bara: No. She was leading us and she was fighting for us but she didn't want to come back.

Koni: Was he a good leader?

Bara: A good leader. People got passes through him. Do you know Mrs. Ndabaninzi?

Noma: She's moody.

Bara: Yes I know. Who are the others?

Noma: Late Mrs. Luthango, Ntongana.

Bara: You can also talk to Mrs. Nontulo.

Bara: Her husband was shot dead.

Bara: She was staying with him in New Crossroads. She is the second wife. The thing is that most of the men were staying with their girlfriends here and they would leave their wives in the homelands. When people moved here there was this conflict that she was not married. Like Mrs. Peter. But her husband was a leader but he was burnt to death. Other people who know a lot about Crossroad are Mr. Ncata but he is not staying here. How is Mrs. Ndabaninzi's husband? Can he speak?

Noma: I did not go to her house.

Bara: The thing is that she is scared of people.

Noma: She's not always available.

Bara: Yes it's true. It is better to cancel her. Was Mama
Mapisa not chased out?

Noma: No.

Bara: Mrs. Yanta is not staying here.