



Interview with Esther Kanhinge

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Interview with Esther Kanhinge

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Interviewee: Esther Kanhinge

Place: Unit O, Seke, Chitungwiza

Date: December 8, 2003

Can you start off by telling me your name?

My name? I am Esther Kanhinge. I come from Mrewa in Uzumba.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up out there in Mrewa.

Where was your father?

When the war started, father was here in Harare. He was working at United Omnibus Company (the then Harare transit Company). He was a driver of one of the buses. Later on he became a bus inspector.

Did you go to school?

Yes I did.

At home?

I started off at home (in Mrewa) and then I came here to do my Form 2.

How far had you gone with school by the time the war started?

Form 2.

When did the war start (in Mrewa)?

We used to go home a lot. The war started much earlier. 1960 was the year we began seeing soldiers in our area. My mother's brothers were arrested around '61, '62.

Why had they been arrested?

Something to do with politics.

When were you born?

I was born in 1941. After my uncles had been arrested we saw the soldiers coming to our home frequently.

Whose home?

At my uncles, that is my mother's home.

They also lived in Mrewa?

Yes they were in Mrewa. My father and mother had divorced so I was living at my uncles.

Did your father ever visit you?

Yes.

At your uncles?

Yes. He used to come a lot.

Had he remarried?

He was now with my stepmother.

Where did they live?

She was living here with father.

Where exactly?

In Mbare. On Mhlanga Avenue.

So that is where your father, stepmother and their children lived?

No. He did not have children with my step mother. So as I got married.

Where you still with your uncles when you got married?

No, I was now at my father's. I had gone home. Our homes are in the same area.

In the same village?

No. My father's home, where I lived, was in a different village. Okay, so as time went on, my husband went to Ndola, in Zambia.

Did he also come from the Mrewa area?

He also came from Mrewa.

Why did he leave? Where you divorced?

No. You know, I had eloped. You know how it is, you go to your husband's home and he is not there to soften things up and you do not get along with your in-laws. So I went back to our home.

Did you go back to your mother's or?

I went to my father's.

Whom were you going to live with?

I was going to live at our home. I was going to live with my aunt's (father's sister) children.

They lived in your home?

They lived in our home.

Did you have children already?

I had a baby son.

Just one?

Just one. So I lived at home. By then the war had started.

When was that?

In the '60s. By then we were seeing soldiers everywhere. The policemen too.

So the policemen also frequented your home?

They frequented our home.

Who was your District Commissioner?

Our District Commissioner was at Mrewa. At Mangwende's.

What was his name?

His name was Wiri. He was a white man. So there were two parties, ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union). But ZAPU was the leading party. But as you know even here there were two parties. So my brother was in the ZAPU party, I joined ZANU and my father was in the ZANU party too.

Was that you older brother?

He was older than me, yes.

How many were you in your family?

We were 5. We were all born by the same mother.

How many girls?

There were 4 girls and 1 boy.

Were the others at your uncles?

They were at my uncles. The girls were already at their own homes. They had been married. Our brother was the one who lived at home (at her father's) but he was working by then (so he did not lived at home anyway).

Where was he working?

He was driving the Farai Uzumba buses.

Where was he living?

Here in Harare. So as I was saying I was living at home but Nkomo's party had many supporters. So I was regarded as a sell-out (since she had joined ZANU).

By who?

By the other people, the ZAPU followers. So I left because I was afraid that I might be murdered. I went to my uncles and began living there. Then there came a stranger, he was ZAPU and he was coming to see my uncles. He began asking whether I had just visited or there was some motive behind my coming to live at my uncle's. Was I a ZANU member? When I told him that I was a ZANU party member he told my uncle that he did not want to hear that.

Hear what?

That there were both ZANU and ZAPU supporters, everybody should be ZAPU. He mentioned that he was being detained every year for political reasons. So he also he that when they were detained (by the Rhodesian government) they (both ZANU and ZAPU supporters) were all put in the same jail. When that man went away, my uncle asked me which party I had joined and I told him that "Uncle I prefer ZANU." He asked me why and I told him that my father and everyone else in my family were ZANU and therefore I did not want to begin branching out on my own. Besides I really like supporting ZANU up to this day. At that time ZANU was led by Sithole. Yes, Ndabaningi Sithole. So I stayed for some time while ZANU and ZAPU continued (gaining more supporters) until I came here to Harare and saw that our parties were fighting against each other.

Where were you staying in Harare?

I was going to my father's. The parties were involved in a tug of war. My father told us, "Go home and live there."

You and who else?

Me and my aunt's children. So we stayed there in the countryside like we had before.

Your aunt's children were also ZANU members?

No. They were ZAPU. So that was a problem.

You lived in the same house?

Yes. I was the mother (According to Shona culture, a woman/girl is seen as a mother by her aunt's [father's sister] children.) who cooked for all these children when they were going to their youth meetings. So they were ZAPU while I was ZANU. We stayed at our home and father often came and told these children not to sell-out their mother (me) since we belonged to different parties.

Were they selling you out?

Yes. They were the ones who went and told the other people that I was a ZANU member.

Did you get beaten up?

No. I was never beaten up, just harassed. It was a problem. They used to come and shout at me. I was lucky because the policemen used to patrol the area a lot (so they could beat her up). We were constantly arrested (Africans were not allowed to be politically engaged) and we were sent to the police station where we were beaten (by the police). By then they were not so selective, everybody was beaten. It did not matter whether one was a member of Nkomo's or Sithole's. . . But Nkomo had been a leader for some time. We were afraid and sometimes we joined ZAPU supporters although both parties were banned. But in our hearts we knew what we wanted. So we stayed on at our home in the country. Father retired and he came to live at home too.

Did he bring your stepmother?

They came together. By the time they settled at home, magandanga (Shona word for murderer but used by the Rhodesian government to refer to guerillas) were now being seen everywhere.

Was that war time by then?

Yes. That was in the 70s. So the magandangas were moving everywhere. As they were moving everywhere like that we had already been moved into keeps (internments officially known as protected villages. Africans called them keeps referring to the way they were 'kept' inside the internments). But before we were put in the keeps our home became the base for the boys (guerillas). That is where they came to eat.

Why did they choose your home?

Because father was a staunch ZANU supporter. So all the magandangas who were coming from the bush, that is those who were coming from this direction (Mozambique) were all ZANU. They chose our home because they saw it fit for their base.

Did they know that your father belonged to ZANU?

You know such things will get known no doubt.

How did your aunt's children feel about all this (since they were ZAPU)?

By then they were supporting ZANU. Most people were now ZANU supporters (Mrewa was and still is a ZANU stronghold). That was because the magandangas had held pungwes (Shona word for all-night but in this case it meant political meetings held by ZANU at night) in the area and they had educated the people about who they were and why they were there fighting. So as time went on, our house continued to be used as a base for the magandangas. Unfortunately, one person from our village went to the soldiers and told them of what was going on at our home.

Why did he do that?

He was the chief and so he got along with the (Rhodesian) government. He was being paid by the government. He told them that our home was a base for the magandangas. My father was arrested by the soldiers at gun point and they took him away.

How old was he?

He was old.

Roughly how old?

He was in his 70s, 70 or 75. When father was taken at gun point, our (step) mother went back to her natal home. She left our home. She took with her some cattle (her father's) and many other things. She is my amainini (cousin), daughter to my mother's brother. She is the one who married my father after my mother died.

Was she the reason behind your parents' divorce?

No. Our mother died after the divorce. She was buried at my uncle's. After her death, my father was given a chigadzamapfihwa (second wife who is usually a niece of the deceased woman).

Was your stepmother good to you?

Yes. Up to this day we get along very well. She is our mother. So when my stepmother went back to her home she took all the cattle with her.

Your father's?

Yes. She was taking them to our uncles so that they can be looked after there. I was with all the children, including hers. My stepmother was still very young and only had two children. Our house (in Harare) was being used by the lodgers. Our father was in jail at that time.

What happened to you when your father was arrested?

We were beaten. We were taken to an army camp called Manyika and we were beaten while we were hanging (from a tree, feet up and head down).

What did they want?

They wanted us to confess about how we used to cook for the magandangas.

Did you cook for the magandangas?

Yes. We did. So we told them that we were cooking for the magandanga because we had no choice. Isn't it that even the soldiers told us that whenever we see anybody with a gun we should do whatever they wanted. Because you do not know what they will do to you if you refused so we had to listen to the person who was holding the gun. So that is what we did. There was no way that my father would have refused to cook for the magandangas.

Who else was arrested with you?

There was me and my stepmother's children. My stepmother was not there the day we arrested as she had to gone to Nyadire (Hospital) with the children. So they just arrived and they took my father and then they arrested us. We were taken to Manyika, the police camp. My aunt's children were also beaten up.

What were their names?

Winnie and Peter. Those were my aunt's (father's sister) children and we lived with them. They were just beaten despite that they told the soldiers that, "we are young children we know nothing."

May be they (guerillas) used to come while we were sleeping, so know nothing.” But I told them the truth. That we cooked for them because we were scared of them. They came and had sadza. So they asked how we cooked for them. I told them that there were many of us (who cooked). In fact the whole village did. I tried to convince them that I was telling them the truth because I had nothing to hide. We cooked for them. They asked where they lived. I told them that I did not know where they lived because they just come for their meals and then leave. Yet these were men who used to come and live at our house sleeping in the hozi (granary hut.) They were actually at our home when we were arrested. Then they asked me if I could show them where they were if I asked. I told them that I did not know where they were because they just visit each and every home. It so happened that that day they were at our home. I was breast feeding my baby while I was hanging from a tree by my legs. They tied me to a tree. I was upside down.

How long were you hanging like that?

I could go for up to two hours like. Sometimes I felt really dizzy. When they eventually put you down while you were feeling dizzy like that you felt like you were going crazy. After some time in an upright position they hanged you up side down again. Whenever a new group of soldiers or guard forces came in and they asked us questions and everytime, the questions were asked while you were hanged up side down again.

How long were you there for?

I think I was there for four days. Yes. I was at Manyika’s for four days. When a new group of soldiers came in they also started asking you questions. They would ask us what we were in for. Then they would say, “These are the ones who are cooking for the magandangas.” At that time there were also a lot of landmines along the roads and many soldiers’ cars were blown up by the landmines. Eventually I was told to go home but they told us that they would come back for us again.

Was the beating bad?

It was really bad. I was bleeding from the ears, nose, and mouth.

Which part of your body were they beating?

They clapped us a lot. They stretched out their hands and then brought their palms together as they closed on your face with a ringing pain. You know like a double slap. I never wanted to go through that again. I also had to think of my children so I decided to leave and I took all my children and we walked the whole night.

From where?

We were running away from our home. Remember we had gone back home. So we were walking the whole night.

How many children did you have?

The ones that I have mentioned before. My aunt’s two children and my very own who was at my back. We walked the whole night. When we reached Harare we had nowhere to go because there were lodgers at my father’s house.

So how long did you walk?

From our home to Mrewa center. I think it was about 20 miles. (I don't know what you call that in kilometers. I went to school when there still miles.) That was the only place we could get a bus.

So there were no buses in all the areas before Mrewa center?

There were buses but we were afraid.

When was that?

That was in 1974.

The war was already hot in Mrewa by then?

Yes. By then we were already in the keeps.

Who cooked for the comrades when you were in the keeps?

We did. They came into the keep just like ordinary person.

Right into the keep?

Right into the keep. They just walked in. They could dig trenches under the fence or they would walk in through the gate using their zvitupas (identity cards.) Yes their original zvitupas. They were so daring. Besides, the guard forces did not really know everybody in the keep. All they wanted was for everyone to have a chitupa.

Didn't the IDs have a picture?

Oh who cared about that? They got in all the same. The boys spent the days in the keep and they also drank chikokiyana (home-made distilled spirits) beer (clear beer) and ndari (opaque beer brewed over seven days.)

Where was the keep?

It was at Muswe's, where Mugabe Secondary School is right now. So these boys just used to come and have their sadza and leave. So I eventually left with my children and we came to stay in Harare.

After leaving the army camp, how long did you stay at your rural home before heading to Harare?

U-m I was there for a month. And that was only because I was packing our belongings so that I would lock them up in the house for safekeeping. I also took some of the stuff to other people so that they would look after it while we were away.

Were you taken to hospital after all the beatings?

We were not sent to hospital. I had headache and other problems. For instance my wounds were infected and they kept oozing puss. So I left with the children on foot. We then got the bus at Mrewa. When we arrived in Harare we found that our house was rented out to lodgers.

Was it your father who had rented out the house?

Yes, that was my father. They paid rent to my father so that he could make a little extra money.

Was your father ever released from detention?

No he was not, until independence.

All the time (during the war) he was in detention?

Yes.

Did he come back alive?

He was alive.

Congratulations.

Thank you. We stayed with him until he died in '94. So we stayed in Harare. Father who was at Chikurubi (Maximum Prison) told me that he was among those people who were supposed to be killed. The plan (for the Rhodesian government) was that if Mugabe did not win all those people at Chikurubi were supposed to be killed. I visited father (at the prison) and he advised me that I should ask the lodgers to leave so that we can stay at home. He also said that I should go and get mother (stepmother) from the rural areas and bring her over to Harare. But my (step)mother did not want to leave because she was looking after the livestock. So I lived with the children in Mbare (the oldest African township).

But where did you go to live when you arrived in Harare and found your father's house full with lodgers?

We stayed at Mbare.

You mean Mbare Musika?

Yes. Mbare Musika (the long distance bus termini that serves the rural areas-Harare routes).

Can you please explain what it was like at Mbare Musika?

We lived in zvikweshe plastic shacks. It was hard living at Musika.

Which year did you go to live there?

1977. It was hard to live at Musika especially for us women. And then there were the Harare thieves. If you were not careful you could be raped. People could tell that the refugees came from the rural areas because they behaved like rural people.

How would they get to you, I mean for them to rape refugee women?

Sometimes they waited until you were in your chikweshe. You could tell him off, tell him that you were not interested in having a relationship with him but he did not care.

How would he know where you lived?

Because they were also living in the zvikweshe. Thieves took advantage of the situation to live in the zvikweshe where they did not have to pay rent. Again they now had a place to hide such that it was now hard for the police to arrest them. Yes. Thieves were now living among the squatters. But then again there were some women who wanted these men. They were fooled by these thieves to think that they had found themselves a man (to marry). Life there was hard. The kind of toilets we had, for some of us who were used to a better life, it was hard. Water for drinking was a problem. We did not have shelter for the cooking places especially when the rains were falling, it was hard. But we did not live there for a long time.

How long were you there for?

I think we were there for two months. We stayed there long enough so that the lodgers would serve their notice (three months from the time they were told to leave the house they were renting.) Father had said that we should tell them to go.

Had you been given permission to live at Mbare Musika?

There was no other place that people could go and live other than living at Musika. So we stayed there for two months waiting for the lodgers to move out. But life at Musika was hard. Most young girls ended up having fatherless children. They were impregnated by just about any man. You know people were just aiming for survival. You know how life in town was. It was hard. These were people who were running away from the war. There were boys and girls, and men and women. Most boys ended up being thieves and murderers. Some thought of leaving (Musika) and go to Derbyshire Quarry. They did not like the kind of life we had at Musika and so they left for Derbyshire Quarry to join the squatters who were living there. Those were the people who ended up at Chirambahuyo (in what we now know as Chitungwiza town.) By then I was working, I had been lucky enough to get a job.

Where were you working?

I now was working at Parirenyatwa (Hospital).

What kind of job did you have?

I was cleaning the doctors' houses and doing other small jobs. I was now part of the hospital home aid.

What qualifications did they need for one to get such a job?

If you were a cleaner they were not too fussy about the qualifications. Anybody could be the cleaner.

Had you moved into your father's house by the time you were working?

Yes I was living at my father's house.

What did you survive on when you were living at Mbare?

We survived on the money that we took from the lodgers. The moment I arrived in town I went to see my father and I told him that we ran away from home. I told him that we were suffering from increasing beatings that it was unbearable and also that children were being raped.

Raped by who?

By the guard forces.

In the keep?

Yes. Many children were impregnated. I also told him that I had been arrested.

You had been arrested?

Yes. That time when I was taken to Manyika's. So father said I should give the lodgers a notice and use the money he was paying for rent to buy our own needs. He said that the whole house should not have lodgers at all so that we could have enough rooms to stay. He said, "Whatever you want to do, do it, I will come later. When mother comes she will know what to do. She should sell the cattle at home so that you can come and live here." But mother did not want to come and live in Harare because she was afraid that the livestock might be sold while she was away. The guard force also killed people's cattle and ate them.

Cattle which belonged to those people in the keep?

Yes. Many cattle were eaten. At the same time the magandangas also wanted some meat. Whenever they heard that these cattle belonged to a sell-out they took those cattle and killed them.

Was your father considered a sell-out?

No my father was not considered a sell-out. So after that when father was still there (in detention) we stayed until elections (1980) and then mother came from home. That was the time when she felt that things were not that bad at home anymore. At that time no-one was stealing anybody's livestock like it had been during the war.

With whom did she leave the livestock?

She left them with her father. Yes, her father was looking after the livestock. So when mother came home (in Harare) I went to look for my own place to rent in St Mary's (a township in Chitungwiza) since I was now working.

Why did you move to St Mary's?

Because I wanted to give my (step)mother some space.

Had she asked you to leave the house (in Mbare)?

No. You see I was a grown woman by then and my (step)mother was younger than me. She was born in 1954. So I did not want to live with another woman in the same house, it's trouble. She was mother and I wanted her to have the respect that her title entitled. But because I was older and also because I was the breadwinner, I did not want to stay with her for fear that I would start

bossing her around. I was the one who was working. You know, dollar power my child. So I moved out so that mother could have the freedom of the house with the children.

Did she try to stop you from leaving?

She was not happy about my leaving. It was hard to be with the children all alone. But I assured her that whatever she wanted I was going to do for her. I paid the rent for the house. I bought her food but I was a lodger in St Mary's. After a while, Chirambahuyo (a huge squatter camp located at the present site of Zengeza 4) started. The first people to stay there had been removed from Derbyshire where some squatters from the city (Harare) had been dumped by the Salisbury (Harare) Municipality. Life at Chirambahuyo was hard. It was really hard. When those from the bush (ex-combatants) came over (to Chitungwiza) at the time when they were being sent into assembly points, things were hard for sure. It was hard because these boys were not fighting (in the war) anymore and so they wanted to have girls. They whiled up their time at Chikwanha bar. And then there were those who were now living in the (squatter) village who led a very poor life. They did not have much food. People now had to brew chikokiyana so that they would get money to buy food. These people wanted to do whatever they could help them survive because they were refugees. Very few of them worked. Those who worked were not even refugees but people who were just looking for cheap housing. My sister who comes after me was living there.

Was she married?

She had divorced from her husband. So she survived on cutting (and selling) firewood.

Did they divorce while they were still in Mrewa or?

Ah they divorced long before father had been to detention.

She also ran away from the war?

We both ran away.

Same day?

No. She was coming from another direction. She was on her own. She was coming from my uncles' home. So she looked for a place to rent in Chirambahuyo. I saw that life was hard there. Living in Chirambahuyo was hard. They had to live there because they were told that if they did not live there they would never get housing here (in Chitungwiza.) At one point I had decided to go and live there but I found life there very hard. Living conditions there were terrible. Children just defecated along the walls of buildings. If you went to the toilet it was always full of human faeces. There was no place to put your foot (in the toilet). Those who cleaned the toilets had a hard time. They would come after a month or two. Now look how hard it was. I was working in a hospital which was very clean. Where white people lived. So for me to live there it was very difficult so I did not go there. So you see my child (the interviewee referred to me as her child. According to the Shona custom an older woman can call any younger person child.) when you hear people telling you that they once lived in Chirambahuyo then you should know that they have led a very hard life. It was hard. There was sickness. There was death. Cholera could attack you any time. Flies could fly from the children's faeces straight into the house where you lived. Their houses were grass thatched. Many houses dripped whenever it was raining. Some of the houses were made from plastic. Some people burnt in those plastic houses. If children were playful and

tossed firewood out of the fire the houses just caught fire and started burning. In the process many houses could catch on to the fire because they were too close together. The good thing was that there were many people who would rush to put down the fire. Houses were very close together. You see its like these two houses. (They are less than two metres apart) If this one catches fire the other one will follow suit. Life there was very hard. Okay, back to my story. Then I left the hospital after being influenced by a certain murungu called Sister MacKenzie. She was working at the hospital

Which hospital?

She was the matron at Parirenyatwa. She told me that I wasn't getting a lot of money where I was working. She said, "Yes I know this job has security but you will not get a lot of money from this job to look after your children. So she influenced me to leave and she looked for part time jobs for me from a number of white people. Some of them were nurses working at Parirenyatwa. I saw that I was better off doing that. The part time that I was doing was washing their clothes and ironing them. I washed some of the clothes at home.

In St Mary's?

No. I was washing the clothes in Mbare at my father's because there was more space there. So I washed and ironed the clothes. It was also easy because it was my father's house and no-one was going to complain that I was wasting water.

Did you iron them there?

I ironed them there. I carried the laundry back to the owners.

Did they pay you for the detergent?

They paid me for everything. They gave me laundry soap. So I charged them according to the size of the laundry load. If there were many clothes I would charge more but if they were few I charged less. So they paid me accordingly. I found out that I earned more money than I was being paid at Parirenyatwa as a nurse aid. I was paid 2 pounds 10 you know. That is what they paid me. So that was the life that I was living. I was living in St Mary's at the time. So I earned a living by doing these part time laundries for the nurses. It was God's hand working in my favor. After a little while I left and began to work for the old people at Bumhudzo.

Were the old people African?

No they were white. So I was taken by a certain old woman so that I could go and live with her.

Where?

In Eastlea. You know Bumhudzo is in Eastlea.

Where were you living at that time?

I was living in St Mary's. Then I went and worked at Dorothy Dunken's. By then I was now very good at my job. So I stayed there being such a good worker until that woman died and I was left with her children. Her children asked me to look for a place to live where I could be free with my

children. My family was now big. I had met a certain man who was interested in me. So I now had a big family.

How many children did you have?

I had many children. They were five. So my employers bought me this house where I am living now (from where we conducted the interview).

So you brought your husband here?

No. That man had his own family. You know what happens in life we were so much in love and I loved him whole heartedly. We had children together. But he had his own family in Mhondoro. He was a good man and he never stopped coming to see his children (with her). Up to this day he comes to see them. But I refused to go and do 20 20.

What is 20 20?

To have amaiguru (senior wife) (laughter). But he comes here very often.

Does your co-wife know that you are with her husband?

Oh there is a family. If anything happens to any one of my children he visits to see them. For instance this young girl's mother and father passed away and he came for their funeral. I have many children. One of them who was at University lives at Chiredzi. That is where he is working. So there is no way was he cannot come to visit. I worked for his family (totally avoided the question I had asked her).

Did you send them to school all by yourself?

All by myself. What could I have done. I stopped going to work because of this girl.

This one? (sleeping on the sofa)?

Yes. Both her father and mother passed away. Her father passed away in 2000 and the mother in '95. So she doesn't have anybody looking after her.

Where were you working?

I was working in Nyanga.

Did you living there?

Yes but she was still living with her father.

Whom were you working?

I was working at Village Inn Hotel.

So they did not allow you to bring her along (so that she could stay with her while working)?

No. It was like this, I was living at the farm that belonged to the varungu I worked for. They are the owners of the hotel. So for a school child to live there it was kind of hard. School was really far

away. There are big mountains in that area. There was no way that she could have walked alone to school and at the farm there were no children who were going to school. The workers at the farm left their children in their (rural) homes. Only the parents who worked stayed at the farm.

So what did they (employers) say when you were leaving?

Oh they didn't want me to leave. Up to now they tell me that I can come back and work for them any time I want. You can see what the problem is (pointing to her granddaughter lying on the sofa who looks sickly). She is forever sick.

What is she suffering from?

She says headache, legs, this and that. I always have to take her to hospital.

Oh that was some life that you led while you were in the rural areas?

Ah-a we were in a lot of trouble. We cooked for the boys while we were in the keep. If they did not come into the keep we had to take the sadza to them. So we cooked the sadza but it was not easy to take it out of the keep gate.

So how did you do it?

You could carry your baby at your back and then put the sadza between your back and the baby.

Wasn't it hot?

You had to look for some material so that it did not burn your skin or the baby's too much. Sometimes you pretended that you had a baby on your back when in fact it was food for the boys. You also had to tie the food to your body with another material inside so that when they asked you to untie your bundle the sadza did not have to fall off your back.

Did they not do a thorough search?

They did. But when you had a baby they asked you to take the baby off your back and then they saw that there was nothing. There was no way that they could have asked a woman to take off her clothes. That would have been unlawful. So I would just carry my sadza that way through the gate and then go (to give to the boys).

Oh I thought that once people were inside the keep there was no way that the boys would continue getting food from the people?

That was when we cooked sadza full time, with more strength. Sometimes we went back to our former village. We were allowed to go back to our homes (from the keep) to see to our properties and equipment that we had left there.

Was that really far from the keep?

No. We were in the same village just that we were now on the other side of the school.

Your keep was in your former village?

In the same village. But we had been moved from the old houses to a place close to the school So we used to go and check on our homes.

So where did you put the relish?

We never really did what we usually do: that is put sadza in a different plate from the one that had relish. That was impossible. You just dished the sadza into a big round belly shaped plate. So you put the relish at the base and then the sadza on top, to cover the relish. So you also looked for containers that will stop the food from dripping onto your body or getting into contact with your body. Then you tied it and went. Everyone would do that in her own home.

Oh so there were many of you who were doing this at the same time?

Yes. There were many of us. Sometimes some tied the sadza just below our buttock. (Some young man walk in and is introduced to me "This is my last born.") Every woman would look for a plan so that they can get out (with the boys' food.) What were they going to eat if we did not feed them! We had to feed them.

I thought you said earlier that they used to dig tunnels under the fence to get into the keep?

Once they had dug out the tunnel then they had to come inside and eat from inside. They dug under the fence.

Was it barbed wire or security fence?

It was security fence. You think barbed wire would have stopped us from feeding the boys? We would simply have gone to the wire and gave them the food over the fence and told them to hurry away.

There were no search lights (around the keep)?

What used to happen was usually the soldiers would take some time off to go and drink. They liked beer very much. So they went to the growth point to drink. So that was when we left to go to the pungwe or morari with the boys.

You left the keep to go to pungwe?

Yes.

At night?

Yes.

When you were living in a keep?

Yes.

I thought there was a curfew?

It was there. But that was not important because we had to feed our children (the guerillas). We had to use our brains. There were those people who used to come and announce messages at

the top of their voices. They were Political Commissars. The announcements were made in such a way that they pretended to be talking about something neutral when in actual fact they were telling people that there was a pungwe that night. So yes, we had to go.

Didn't the soldiers do house to house checking to see whether you were in the house?

You mean opening every door and looking inside? That was impossible. There was no way that they could have done that. Interestingly there were some nice soldiers who actually warned us to be careful because if another cruel group of soldiers came we could be in trouble. "We know where you spent the night (at the pungwe)." They told us.

They would let you know that they knew?

Yes. Some would tell us. When some of them found you sleeping during the day they asked you where you were at night and what you had been doing that night that made it impossible for you to sleep. We simply said that we were sick. You had to be sick. There was nothing that you could do. Those times were hard my child. The boys ended up burning the keeps and then we went back to our former homes.

So they allowed you to go back?

They told us to go back. They had burnt the keeps, where were supposed to go and live? They came and told us during the day. They told us to pack our things and that they were going to burn the keeps that evening. They did not want us to be controlled in the keeps by the soldiers. So they came and set fire to our houses in the keep. They told us they would break all the poles and remove them and then burn the house (the houses were made from pole and dagga). So when the keep went up in fire we pretended that we were running about trying to save our property from burning when in actual fact we had packed our stuff long ago. Things were already packed all we did was pick up the bundles and throw them outside the fence.

So they (soldiers) would see people walking about without any clue that they were packing?

War time was a difficult time. But some of us were now having a good time, very much into helping the magandangas. We were so much into it that we did not care about what the soldiers would do to us in the event that we were caught. We did not care whether we were alive or dead. We did not care about the guard forces. Because there came a time that wherever you were walking you came across a dead body. A person who had been killed by the soldiers or the boys, or someone who had been blown up by the landmine or those killed by soldiers in a helicopter. There was nothing that we could do. Dead bodies were not a scary thing anymore. You could see one being eaten by a dog here and another one there. Yes. We were now really into helping the magandangas and we were used to the (war). We got used, but that was not easy. A gandanga would come to you shot and wounded by the soldiers and it was up to us to take him and put him behind the water tins (20 litres) and then you would pack things in front of the 20-litre tins in such a way that nobody who walked into the house would see him. We would feed him from behind those tins. When his colleagues came to collect him he would then leave. They dug under the fence and got in and carried him away with them. If he died inside here (in the keep) men from the keep would carry him outside at night and bury him. Yes, They buried him and then they would put signs so that they can recognize the grave when it was time to tell the magandangas that one of them had died.

Weren't there sell-outs who would then tell the guard force what was going on?

They were there. They sold out other people. Some actually had over overs (walkie-talkie) which they used to inform the soldiers that here so and so is doing this and that.

What happened when they reported you?

Then they would come and harass you inside the keep. There was one guard called Zimowa. In 1976 he went and told (those) at a keep called Nhakiwa (at my uncles')

There were many keeps in Mrewa?

There were many. How many were there, let me say. There was one at Mataririraedege, another one at Muswe and then there was that one at Chidodo's and another one at Chitiyo's, then one at Nhakiwa, and another at Chitimbe. Have you ever heard that there was one woman who left her baby in the keep while she mistakenly carried a dog thinking that it was her baby.

Oh what happened?

She carried a small dog. The dog had heard an exchange of gun fire when the boys were fighting against the soldiers and at the same time the magandangas were burning the keep down. As I told you they used to warn us. So when the battle started, this woman decided to carry her child on her back getting ready to leave. Unfortunately she left her child and picked up a puppy. So she carried the puppy on her back. The puppy never barked because gun shot sounds were so frightening that it kept it quiet. Even dogs were scared of the war you know.

I have heard about that story.

Oh you have heard about it! She carried a dog and ran away carrying that dog. When she got to the place where they were hiding for the night she just slipped in the blankets and slept with that dog on her back. War is bad my daughter. When you are hurrying, anything is possible.

But didn't she feel that there was something amiss given the shape of a dog?

I don't know how she did it but it happened. This is a true story. So the magandangas, yes the comrades, are the ones who came and discovered the baby at the keep where the woman had fled from. They were the ones who had burned the keep. They went through the camp so that they could help those who had not been able to get out and they found the baby there. They took the baby and followed in the direction where they had seen people running towards. So this woman was beaten up (by the magandangas) because they said she did not know what she was doing simply because she had left her baby behind.

So she was beaten up by the magandanga simply because she had mistakenly left her baby behind?

Yes, it was because she had left her baby behind. They asked her how she could only think of herself, preserving her own life while she left her child behind. What if they had burned the place before looking to see whether there were still any people inside! So she argued that she thought she had been carrying her baby on her back all along. It was only when she looked that she saw

that she was in fact carrying a dog. That was the war we had to endure my dear. Anything was possible.

What time did you run away from the keep?

It was at night. We had to run at night because they always burned the camps at night. Never in the afternoon. The other thing was that they told you well in advance and so we had our sadza (meal) earlier than usual and then just sat waiting for signal so that we can start running. So we had to eat very early so that we would have the strength to run.

You ran away before the camp was burned?

What we did was take out our things. The most important items which were light we carried with us. The rest we just left it there. But we took all our belongings outside the keep some days before the day the keep was burned. We hid our belongings. And then they burned down the houses. That way we had something to say – that we were running away from the magandangas who had burned down our houses. The soldiers could not argue with that.

So you did not run away before the keep was burned up?

No. We waited until they started burning the camp and then we would start running. That was the reason that we used for leaving the keep. So when the comrades burned the keep we were told that we should go back to our villages.

Did they burn many of them?

Usually they did. Most people had their whole homestead destroyed. Nothing was left. However, some were lucky enough to remain standing. For some of us our houses were burnt down. Once that happened the soldiers had no choice but to tell us to go back to our old homes. The ones we had been forced to leave when we moved into the keeps. Most of us were afraid of going back to our old villages. We thought the soldiers were tricking us so that they would have an excuse to punish us. So we had ran into the hills to hide there. Some hid along the rivers. Those were times of trouble. One group had just burned down our houses and the other group was telling us to stay in the keep. It was hard. But anyway the soldiers rounded us up and told us to go back to our villages. But still there was a problem. The guard forces had burned down some of the houses in the villages. So it meant that such people who had their homes scorched had to start building anew. Where were they going to stay for the moment? Houses, especially those which were thatched had been burned down. Those which were brick under asbestos were left standing. So the burning of the keep presented new problems. Even those houses which had asbestos roofing had been vandalized. Doors, door frames, windows and window frames were missing.

You mean in the original villages?

Yes. The guard force used to go there and get window frames, door frames and doors and take them to their homes. My father's house had a tin roof. They failed to pull it down to get the door frames. You know some of these houses are very strong. But they took some of the window frames. They got inside the house and looted many things. Because by then they were saying that the home belonged to a dead man because my father had been led away by the soldiers at gun point and so they just assumed that he had been killed. So when Mr Mugabe won (the elections) we were overjoyed. That same day I had a baby and his name is Evidence. He was

born soon after people had lighted the (independence) fire. That was when I started feeling sick (labour pains) and the following day I gave birth at the hospital. We were helped a lot. We were given napkins, towels as my baby was one of the independence day children.

Who gave all those baby wear?

Mr Mugabe (the new Prime Minister).

Together with the other women who had children that day?

Yes. All women who gave birth to all the Rusungukos (independence children) were given the baby clothes. We got towels, napkins – we were surprised to get the clothes because we did not know that he was going to give us anything. I do not breast. I never breast-fed all my children because I had breast cancer. So I used to get milk form the Social Welfare. So that day I was given three tins of milk so that my child could have some milk. After independence my father was released from detention and he decided to go back home (to the countryside).

Did he find his property still there?

He found his cattle there. But his goats were killed by the guard force. Fortunately the new government gave him a katakwara. Do you know what katakwara is?

No.

It's a cultivate. He also got a plough, and a harrow and two drums which were tied to a small cart and these were for getting water (from the well), he also got a scotch cart. He was given seed maize (corn) for three years.

What was that for?

To help him have a good start since he had been away from home for a long time (in detention). His home was also fenced by the government. Right around the whole homestead. There were some people who lived close to our home. They were asked to move to some other place to make room for my father's home – so as to expand it.

Is that right?

Yes.

Was he a chief?

No. He was an ordinary villager.

Was that being done for all detainees?

They were doing that for detainees and father was given all these things. We have a big and beautiful home because we were helped by the government. It was a good home even before the war but my father expanded and improved it. When we go home we plough with our own plough and we also use our own cultivator. We use that cultivator to weed our fields. It's much faster than using a hoe and once a cultivator has gone through the maize field we just follow in its wake straightening the maize plants that would have been covered by the soil during cultivation. We got

all farm implements because my father had been in detention. He was a man who had been to detention because of his belief in the party and so they tried to compensate him.

When you ran away from home (to Harare) did you ever go home to check on your things or you just stayed in town for good?

We used to go to check on our home very often.

Was that before the end of the war?

Yes, before the end of the war.

Was it easy to travel back to the rural areas during the war?

It was possible to travel. Just that at that time it was kind of scary to stay at home for long periods.

Who was looking after your children at the time when you were arrested before you left your rural home for Harare?

I left them alone. I had a boy who was in Form 2 and then a girl in Form 1. They were already anamujibha (guerilla assistants). I was worried about the boy. In actual fact I am happy I left our rural area because he might have been killed during the war. He was really interested in working with the boys (guerillas). Even after locking him in his room he would jump through the window and go to work with them.

The comrades?

Yes the comrades. So I decided to remove him from the area totally and thus I brought him with me to Harare. These children belonged to my aunt and she had passed away. She left them while they were very little and father took care of them. So I am their mother. You the kugara nhaka (traditionally it was her responsibility to look after the children after her aunt passed away and hence she was the mother). So up to this day I am their mother.

Were there any road blocks?

They were there. But we had zvitupa (identity cards) by then.

When did you get zvitupa?

In 1975.

Did the identity cards have pictures?

Yes they had a picture. So at the road blocks we had to produce our IDs. Even when we were getting into the keeps we had to produce our IDs too. When we got in or got out we had to show our IDs. We needed IDs for everything. In the end we kept them around our necks. At that time our IDs were paper ones and we had to keep them in a plastic so that they could last for a long time. Some tied it to the pocket and when you got to the keep gate you took it out and showed it to them. When you were leaving you did the same.

Okay. Can you tell me how you got your job at Parirenyatwa?

I got it because my friend and I had been looking for a job.

You just walked looking for a job?

Yes. I was also helped by some of my friends who were working and they lived in Mbare.

Where you living at your father's home by then or you were still at Mbare Musika?

No I when I started working I was already living at home.

Can you please describe to me your daily routine from morning till sunset when you were refugees at Mbare Musika?

You see we lived at Mbare Musika. We looked for something to sell.

So you were selling?

You had to look for something to do to make money. But all that time when the others (refugees) were selling, I was not doing that. I was an older woman and as a person who had been lived in Harare before so I had many people that I knew. I also had some idea of what I could do so I was looking for a job. That was my aim because I had a home here.

Did you go to school?

Yes.

So you were never a vendor?

No

What did you do when other women went vending?

I woke up and looked for a job.

Who did you leave your children with when you went to work?

My older children took care of the younger ones.

Did your daughter ever become a chimbwido?

Yes she was a chimbwido.

Were your children happy about leaving the countryside for the city?

They were not happy at all. They wanted to keep on doing what they were doing, working with the boys.

Being a chimbwido and a mujibha?

Yes. But to be a chimbwido or mujibha you did not have to be a very young person. There were some men and women who were in their twenties and thirties who were either chimbwidos or mujibhas. Then there were also single women like me who became a zvimbwidos. We also went

to pungwes and we cooked for the boys. Sometimes we would even use those clay pots which were on our aunt's and grandmother's graves. Yes, those pots were used to cook meals. We clapped our hands as a sign of respect and took the pots. Then we washed them and cooked in them and put them back afterwards.

You mean the pots which were on graves?

Yes.

You were not afraid?

It did not matter. You just clapped hands and then washed them and cooked the meals. The thing is that we could not leave the keep with all the pots and plates that we needed to cook for the boys. That was the problem. It would have been big trouble to be seen carrying a bundle of pots and plates. So we used the clay pot on graves and then washed the pots and after that we clapped hands and put the pots back.

Weren't you afraid?

There was nothing to be afraid of. Even when we slept outside at the pungwes we were not afraid. When you saw a snake, you just let it go. You did not kill it. We did not want to anger the spirits.

Were there times when you had to sleep in the bush?

Yes we had to, at the pungwes. Everyone used to sleep there. We were a little afraid at the beginning. It was worse for those who were younger.

Did the old people go to the pungwes too?

They did. So when there was a pungwe and the older people were called there was probably a reason for calling them. Sometimes it was because there was an announcement that the comrades were making. They could be talking about what they had seen, heard or what they wanted done. Or they had heard about a sellout whom they wanted to discipline. That was one of the main duties of the mujibhas. One person could go and tell the soldiers that the boys were at such and such a place. The soldiers came immediately and harassed the whole village. So the mujibha's duty was to go the boys and give them a warning that they had been sold out and that they should leave before the soldiers arrived at their base or the village in which they were. The mujibha would go immediately. If it was me who had heard it I would tell the next person. And that person did not have to go all the way to tell them boys. You just told the next person and it went on like that. The communication was well organization. A message could go a long distance in a relay method like that. Yes, just like that. Communication was important my child. If I heard the message here it did not end here. Once I had heard it, it meant that I will have to run to another village or the next homestead and inform the other people there. Those people then told the next village or house and it went on like that. In the end all the bases would know what was going on and they would be alert. They could also decide to leave their bases and go to some other place. They tried to leave everything in order at the place they are vacating so that there are no signs that the comrades had been there. By the time the soldiers arrived they would find them gone.

How did you manage to bring your children to Harare when they wanted to stay in the countryside where they supported the guerillas?

I had to encourage them to come with me.

What did you tell them?

I told them, "Look here my children, your grandfather is in detention and waiting on death row. You would get killed and I would get killed if we continue to stay here. I am your mother and I was left with you, if you both die I will be on my own, who am I going to live with." So I kept on encouraging them to come with me. I told them that once we got there (in Harare) and hid their grandfather's clothes I would let them go back to our rural home.

Where were you going to hide them?

We were just taking them to our Harare home. I told them once we have done that we will go back. I am going to leave my young child, he was still very young. He was a boy. I told them that I was going to leave him at Chinyaradzo Children's Home and then we would all go back. So that is what I told them. But when I arrived here (in Harare) I quietly looked for school vacancies for them and they started going to school.

Which school did they attend?

One was at Chiroodzo Primary School and the other one was at Harare Secondary School.

Were they going to school for the two months that you lived at Mbare Musika?

No they were not. They were just sitting there. They did not go to school that whole year. But I made them go to school the following year.

So what did they do the whole day?

They spent it sitting at home.

Did you start working soon after arriving at Mbare Musika?

No. My children spent the day at home while I was out looking for a job.

Didn't they keep asking when you were going to go back home?

I was now talking to them as a mother, as a parent. I told them anyone with his/her own bus fare could go back. But we later went back to cultivate our crops as we were people who had a home. I was just tricking them when I told them that we would go back.

When did you go back to farm?

Before independence. When people were removed from the keep that was when we started going to farm at home. We would just go and plant or weed and then come back here and then go again at harvesting time.

Was the war over by then?

No. The war was not yet over. Curfew was still there and so we were not allowed to travel at night. But by then people were back in their villages. I think it was the ceasefire time.

Okay, 1979?

Yes. So we used to go home and plant crops so that we would get something to eat. So we went to plant our fields during school holidays and then later on we would go again to weed. So we were working hard to make things work. The crops supplemented what we bought in town.

Were the people living at Musika involved in politics in the two months that you lived at Musika?

A lot.

I mean in the plastic town (as opposed to Mbare the suburb)?

Yes, there was a lot of politics going on. Some of the people were sell outs. When they arrived at Mbare Musika they continued doing their evil work. They went ahead and sold out other people.

At Musika too?

Yes. They had fled from their homes because they were sell outs but when they arrived at Mbare Musika they were still sell-outs.

But to who did they report whatever they were going to tell?

They would say look at these people they are holding political meetings. We left our homes because we did not have places to live we come here and these people are still carrying on with political meetings. We are afraid they will make us be shot by the soldiers. Some people were actually arrested right in the zvikweshe (plastic shelters) because of the sell-outs. Money is not good. You can sell out your brother to death for a few dollars.

Really? Why?

Because of nationalist politics. Yes. People were arrested. If you saw those people who went to live at Derbyshire Quarry! They wouldn't have gone to live there had there been no politics. Politics is the reason why Derbyshire Quarry existed. People just organized themselves and went to Derbyshire Quarry. From Mbare to Derbyshire Quarry people remained political.

Why did people prefer to move to the Quarry?

To live there?

Yes.

That was because there were not that many policemen. I mean policemen were there right there but not as much or as close as they were at Mbare Musika. As you know to eat honey you have to be bitten by the bees. You know they brewed chikokiyana (home-distilled spirits) and yet it was illegal.

Where?

At Derbyshire. So people were free to hold their political meeting at Derbyshire. They had leaders who organized them in their parties. Even at Chirambahuyo there was a lot of politics going on.

Which political parties were these?

There were so many ZANU people. Up to this day.

How about ZAPU?

U-m there were a few who belonged to that party in Harare. The problem was that ZANU was now an overwhelmingly predominant party. Both ZANU and ZAPU were there but these two parties were always fighting against each other. Party members attacked each other because of the rivalry between the two parties.

Did people ever fight among themselves?

Several times, a lot. As you might have heard when the boys got into the keeps, I mean in the assembly points, some were in Unit O (the ZIPRAs-Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) while some (the ZANLAs-Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) were at Zengeza 4. So there were showers of bullets in between. They were firing at each other. Here there were some houses at Red Cross which were burned down as they were caught in the cross fire. But by the time I came to live here the boys had left.

When did you buy this house?

In 1981.

How did you afford it?

My employers bought it for me.

From whom did they buy the house?

From Onious Ngaadzikwa.

Where did he come from?

He came from Marondera.

Why did he sell?

He did not have money to pay rent so he sold the house.

Didn't you face a problem in trying to change ownership because these houses belonged to people who had been living at Chirambahuyo (a huge squatter/refugee camp established on the outskirts of Chitungwiza)?

It was a problem because when he sold this houses these houses were still under the Council. So they were houses rented from thr Chitungwiza City Council). When I bought this house I was a bit foolish (her own word) because I did not really know the procedure. So they (her employers) went with him to the Superintendent. Then he left. So I stayed here for a long time before I had the name change to mine. After a while his relatives and the relatives of his wife started coming here saying they wanted the house. They were telling me to vacate the house. They said if I wanted to continue living in the house I was supposed to give them a certain amount of money.

Was she dead?

No she was not but they had divorced with the husband. So I refused and I asked them to give me the marriage certificate so that I can use it to change the name and also so that I can give them the money for the house. Otherwise how do I know whether she was the right wife for this man. What if you were just a mapoto (temporary) wife who is trying to get wise (her own word)? So I immediately ran to the Municipality and I put in my application to the Municipality.

What application?

That I wanted a house. So I began waiting in line (on the list) for a house. I then told them that I wanted to have the house that I was living in, the house that I had bought. They told me that my money had gone down the drain because the houses were not supposed to be sold as they belonged to the Municipality and I was supposed to hand it over. I told them I did not have a place to put my children. Okay I understand that I was conned for my money but now I am asking for the house from you. I have now lived in this house for ten years. Now that I have been there for ten years, tell me what I am supposed to do. I am the one with the house card and I am the one that is paying the rent, I am holding everything. This person cheated me. So they answered saying that they won't do that because the house belongs to the Council. They won't give it to me. We only know the person whose name is listed against the house. So I went to the Ministry of Housing and everything was sorted out. (interruption, anyway, she finally got the house)

I have a question on your stay at Mbare Musika. Were refugee women ever abused?

Yes.

Was that really happening?

Young women were in trouble. If you were not careful and behaved in a loose manner, or even agreed to a relationship with a man, anything could happen to you. When we were living in the zvikweshe we were very afraid that we would be raped.

So there were men who just raped women?

They would just wonder around the (squatter) camp and then get into your chikweshe and told you that they wanted you. They would then extend a hand to you giving you some money. But if you were not bold enough to scream – policemen patrolled the area at all times – they could have their way with you. This is why I told you earlier that some girls got pregnant by men who did not care about them and who they did not love or even men they did not know. They were just looking for survival. That is why I immediately went to see my father at Chikurubi so that we could leave the Mbare Musika squatter camp and live at my father's home with my children. It was hard. There were many women. Some of them had their marriages end at Mbare Musika. Such was the life at Mbare Musika. Some were just weak women. They would have fled together with their husbands but then when they arrived at Mbare Musika they found out that their husbands did not earn much or that he did not bring money home and they started coveting other men who could give them a pound (Rhodesian \$2). She did that because she saw that she could survive better that way – together with her children. She did not realize that she was going into the bush (doing wrong things). So that was life at Mbare. Life was hard. Some went into the toilets where they had sex.

In the toilet?

There was no life there. Sometimes when I remember it my heart grows sad. Some women got so many (sexually transmitted) diseases at Mbare. In those two months that we lived at Mbare Musika we ended up spending the day at home and then in the evening we would go back to Mbare Musika to sleep. But we could not sleep there because the house was full of lodgers. We were also afraid of erecting a chikweshe in our yard because tsotsis (thieves) could easily see us and know that there were people who were sleeping outside and they would come and attack us. But there were so many people at Mbare (comfort in numbers) that we felt safe sleeping there. Besides, the City Council would have harassed us had we built our chikweshe in our yard. But during the day it was easier we would just sit outside the house as if we were the current residents. At Mbare Musika things were really bad. At that time things were really bad. There were tsotsis, murderers, con men who cheated other people's daughters into sleeping with them or even conned the squatters of their few belongings. Some men, good looking men who were working, stopped renting rooms in the location and started living at Mbare Musika. They were now living there. That was because they did not want to pay rent and thus they were taking advantage of the situation. Those were the majority of the men who cheated young girls into believing that they would marry them.

Were there many young women who came by themselves running away from the war?

There were many of them. Some ended up helping themselves by working for women in the residential areas. Women in the location who owned houses wanted workers. These women told the squatter girls they could look after them and provide them with meals and clothing in exchange for her labour. That is where many girls went. There were some women, very good hearted women who helped these girls out. But some girls were already deep into prostitution that they could not see themselves working for these women for small wages or be paid in kind. From that time prostitution was on the increase and up to this day it's still on the increase. There was no turning back.

Were there diseases?

You think that diseases wouldn't spread under those circumstances? They were happy that they were surviving under whatever circumstances while their peers were dying from hunger.

Other than prostitution what else did people survive on?

Some were vendors. Some went to work for the residents in their small (illegal) plots, while some asked for piece jobs from those residents. Some clever mothers who still had things that they had left at home used to go back home and pound some mealie-meal and brought it back to sell. Some also made grass brooms and brought them here to sell.

Were there many people from Mrewa at Mbare Musika?

I cannot say that they were from Mrewa only. People came from all the four corners of the country especially from Mtoko, Mrewa and (Mount) Darwin. Those were the three main areas. Those were the places where there were serious battles. The war also started in those areas too. Then later on the war became gukurahundi and spread to Masvingo, Marondera, Wedza. It was all over the country when the war was close to the end. From about '77 through '78 and '79 the war was now a gukurahundi (spread all over the country). Many more people came in those years because the

war was everywhere by then. By then there was direct battle between the magandanga and the soldiers.

Where did you get the plastic that you used for building your chikweshe?

We went to pick them up from the rubbish (pit).

Where was the rubbish (pit)?

In Arcadia.

Who build the chikweshe for you?

I build it by myself.

Where did you get the poles which you used to erect your chikweshe?

We used whatever we found. If you found a small stick or you broke a small branch off trees along the Mukuvisi River that was what you used. So we just made one chikweshe big enough to sleep in and then the following morning you would fold it up.

Oh, you did not leave your shelter standing?

Those who left theirs standing were the ones who had husbands. Yes those who could get husbands and those who had their husbands. If you left for a little while you would find your plastic gone.

Ah, stolen?

Yes.

Did it ever happen that you could fold up your plastics and then find someone occupying your spot in the evening?

Yes, that happened.

What did you do under those circumstances?

Nothing. You had to look for another spot. Otherwise what could you do to that person? As long as there was nothing on the spot when they occupied it there was nothing you could do.

Where did you keep your folded stuff during the day?

We took our belongings to the store verandas and then we looked for somebody to guard it. Take me for instance, I had my children, I would ask them to keep watch on our things. They were okay as long as I gave them food to eat during the day. There was no problem.

What did you cook with (fuel)?

Our life was much better (than most of the refugees). Most of the time we did not even cook our meals at Mbare Musika. We just went there to sleep because our house still had some lodgers. But we went to cook at our house, outside the house that is. The only problem was that we could

not sleep outside the house on the yard because we would have been the only ones who were sleeping on the yard in that location.

Where was your house?

It was on Mhlanga. You know Mhlanga Road which goes to Lobels. That was where the house was.

Okay, so that the Majubheki section (of Mbare)?

No. It's not Majubheki. It is the New Location.

Was that the New Lines?

No. It was not the New Lines section either. The new Lines are in Old Bricks. Its close to Mbare Hostel, you know in the area which is called Mapitikoti in National, at Marowa. That is the side where Mbare Hostels is.

Where were you?

We were inside on Mhlanga Road. Let's say this is Beatrice (she is drawing with her finger on the table), Mhlanga branches off Beatrice. We were close to Nazareth. Do you know Nazareth (Clinic)? Nazareth and Chiroodzo (primary school) are close to each other. Then there is the chest clinic (that is Nazareth). When you are at the Chest Clinic, and you are walking towards Musika, there is a straight road that goes to Musika, at the end of that Road you see Mbare Hostels. We were somewhere in between.

So it was quite some distance from Musika?

Yes, it was some distance. The distance was like walking from here to Unit H. (About 1 km)

Yah that's some distance.

Yes. So my children spent the day at our house. I gave them some money for food. So they spent the day there looking after our belongings while I was looking for a job.

Did you manage to bring many clothes when you ran away from home?

We just had the clothes that we were wearing. But when we were staying at Mbare Musika we had carried father's clothes – those that he had left at home – all the time.

You always carried the bags that contained his clothes, couldn't you find a place where you could put them?

No. And that was because there people who were still occupying our house.

In which month did you run away?

That was in August.

Oh so there were no rains?

No rains.

So you stayed there for?

We were there August and September and then we moved to our house. That was where we lived when we left Mbare Musika. By October we were now living at our house.

What kind of life did the other refugees live from your own observations?

Life was hard. It was difficult even to get food to eat.

Where there any donors who came to give you food?

At Mbare? Ah no there were no donors. There were people from the Roman Catholic Church. The sisters used to come and help the children. So if there was any food that was given out, those were the people who did that. I did not hear of any other people, There were no donors.

How did the sisters help people?

They could bring food and clothing for the children. There was cholera because people urinated everywhere. People also hesitated to get into toilets because other people would have messed up the floors also because there were no lights in the toilets. Sometimes they came and took the children to the clinic or to give them food or some place to stay. Other times they gave them clothing.

Which Roman Catholics are you talking about? The ones from the church at Mbare Musika?

No. By then we could not talk about the Mbare Musika Roman Catholic Church. It was just the Roman Catholic Church. We did not really know whether they were coming from Chishawasha or St whatever, they were just Roman Catholics. Those were the people who we saw helping people.

How about the Red Cross?

The Red Cross later helped with medicines for people in Chirambahuyo. It was also helping those people who had houses in Unit H. Those were Red Cross Houses. That was where Red Cross donors were. They were giving people food, clothing to wear, and blankets to cover themselves at night. But when we were still at Musika, my child, there was no Red Cross. The Roman Catholic sisters came once in a while.

Did the police ever come harassing refugees at Mbare Musika?

Too many times. They would burn down those zvikweshes.

You mean those plastics?

Those plastics.

That was terrible. Did they ever burn down the plastics while people's properties were still inside?

Yes, that was possible. Sometimes they would just beat up people. Those policemen were cruel. They were very cruel. The problem was that there were those location dogs. If someone's

chikweshe was left open, the dogs could come and eat their food. You know it was hard for us. It was especially hard for those who had to prepare their meals at Mbare Musika. Tsotsis would also come and steal.

What did they cook with?

With firewood.

Where they get it?

They bought it. People went to look for firewood along the Mukuvisi River and sometimes they just picked whatever sticks they came across and used that for cooking. If you were lucky enough to have money then you could buy some firewood.

Did people ever use plastics for cooking?

They used plastics and beer cartons (looks exactly like the milk cartons in the US). The Shake Shake carton. People also used the corn cob to make fire. They picked up a corn cob that another person would have eaten her corn from.

Even when it was not dry?

Plastics will make them burn.

Was it easy for thieves to steal people's belongings?

Thieves could also come and steal these things because they were now in the open. At the beginning people used to leave their zvikweshe standing and thus their belongings were not exposed to the thieves. Again policemen used to do patrols throughout the night so the thieves would not get a chance to steal. Police's actions made it so much easier for them. When they forced the squatters to pull down their zvikweshe, they made life easier for the tsotsis. When they saw a nice bag they just lifted it and went away with it as if it was their and yet in actual fact they were stealing.

So the policemen were always there?

Yes they were always there. They actually had duties. While some were leaving, the others were arriving.

What did they say?

Go back to your homes.

What if you told them that you ran away from the war?

Same thing. They told us, "Just go back. Isn't it you are the ones who are fighting?" They behaved as if they were not Black people. They were talking as if they were white people. They were very cruel. Sometimes if you answered back when he was talking with you will just hear the sound of a clap, clapping your cheeks Because I had beaten a lot and had my ears bleeding I was actually afraid that if they caught me they struck me on the ears again the pain would start all over. I didn't

want to get close to them. I was afraid of the police and always stayed far away from them. They could beat anyone – men, women and children as well.

So who were numerically superior, I mean among the squatters, the men or the women?

I think there were many more women. But men also ran away from the war and came to live at Mbare Musika. Some fled because they were afraid of getting arrested because they were involved in nationalist politics. It was illegal you know. They were afraid that they would get arrested if they remained in the rural areas because people were selling each other out. Some were afraid of the magandanga. They were afraid that they would be killed because they had sold them out and so they ran away and came to Musika. Then there were the men who had been long standing residents of Harare and they had left their place of lodging to join the squatters at Musika. That is why I talked about thieving and rape cases. It was the town people who behaved like that. Some of the men could not stay with their families – wife and children because they had a single room and when they fled from the war they could not all fit in that one room they rented. So some joined their families at Mbare Musika while others who could afford it looked for bigger rooms to rent. Some chose to stay with their families in that one small room where they were packed. Even if you had ten children you just stayed with them in that one room in the location. Some of those who were living in the hostels had to leave and go and look for a room to rent. Most just joined the Mbare Musika people because they just could not afford to live with their families in rented accommodation. You see what happens is that our faces might all look the same (all Black) but our behaviour would be different. So these people came and stayed at Musika and that way they saved money or they simply could not afford to rent the accommodation.

So they just went around raping people?

No. They would try to ask a girl to get into a relationship with them. Most of those young girls were not used to town life. So she would think that she had found herself a boyfriend and the man would start sleeping with her. But that is not what this girl is looking for, she is looking for love and a man to marry her. So as I said earlier, prostitution increased because of that – because of those pretenders. So she sleeps with the man hoping that they were in it forever but after a while, the man would disappear. Yet they had been sleeping together and she didn't have a clue where the man lived. She would just start a sexual relationship after being told that my name is John and I live at such and such a place. I will come and collect you so that we can live together. Sometimes these men took the refugee girls to someone else's house and after being used she was told to go back to Mbare Musika. The man promised her that he would come back for but he never did. Then the girl went to the house where she had been taken to and got the shock of her life when she was told that they do not know the man that she was looking for.

What kind of problems did boys come across?

Their biggest problem was that they could not find anything to eat. So they became thieves. It was also because they did not have clothes, no food and all. So whenever they saw anybody with some money they would steal it so that they could survive. From that time on thieving was on the increase.

Did many women bring their children to Mbare Musika?

Yes, they did. No woman could ever leave her children behind and live with herself. Life in the rural areas was hard because of the war. If the boys accused you of being a sell out they were going to kill you. On the other hand if the soldiers accused you of something like helping out the magandangas then you were in trouble. Sometimes you were killed right there like what happened some year at our home. This person was taken (by the soldiers) because they had been told that he used to live with the magandangas. He was tied to the helicopter and they went around flying, showing the people that "Here is a gandanga." Eventually they just released him and he fell to the ground.

While the helicopter was in the air?

Yes. And he died on the spot. They were telling people that he was a gandanga and they wanted them to see how they could punish anyone who supported the boys. But there was no way that they could have caught a gandanga because in our rural home area there are hills, mountains and caves. So there was no way that they would have caught a gandanga at all. The best that they could do was may be shoot his leg but catching him! I doubt it. I do not think so. You know what the magandangas could do, they would get into a mountain and he would stand by a tree up side down, still holding his gun and shooting at their aeroplanes and bring them down. They were very skillful and so there was no way that they would have been able to catch them. Those people were clever. Sometimes we would pretend to be going to look for firewood. Then we gave them the food and when they were done eating they gave us back the plates. Here is how we used to do it secretly. The hata that I used to cushion my head from a bundle of firewood that I was carrying on my head was the one that I used. Inside that hata were plates. There was a time when we were looking for firewood and we heard the dho-o sound of gunfire. The magandangas had brought down a small plane.

What was it called (the fighter plane)?

We called it arumanya. It had this sound dhururu. That aeroplane was dangerous because it had binoculars and they could see from the air that there were people down there and they are doing this and that. Sometimes that would happen when we were giving one of the boys some food in the bush. The moment we heard the arumanya approaching he would hide beneath a huge boulder while we pretended to gather firewood like we had no care in the world. Funny thing is that we continued talking with him while he was hiding. But then sometimes the soldiers in the air got suspicious because we were laughing at them with the comrade. As I told you earlier we did not really care about what we were doing (with the comrades) because we were really into the war and we did not care what happened to us. We had reached a stage whereby we wished we had gone (to Mozambique) to join them. As I told you earlier, I had to force my children to come with me because they wanted to remain back there in the country and fight with the boys. That was the spirit that we, the people, now had because of the way that the white people had treated us but especially because of the way that the soldiers were cruel to us. Everytime we went to look for firewood in the bush we got very excited because we knew that chances were that we were going to meet boys like Mabhunu Muchapera (white people you shall perish), Pasi Ndepedu (the earth is ours) and Tichatonga (we shall rule). Yes we knew them by name and we knew the different bases where we were going to meet. So we knew all that was going on and we were really into it. But you know they were people whom you could not get used to too much. We did not talk much because they did not want us to get too familiar with them. We understood that we had to be careful. They were the ones who talked and we simply laughed or smiled. You could not

get used to them because that person was between survival and death. They had hard times. It's not easy to live in the bush and to be hunted by the Rhodesians like an animal. Even when we were approaching them they were always afraid that we might have sold them out. So there were always some of them guarding the area where we held the pungwe. You see now. So you could not be too much at ease with them. When they were leaving they never really said good bye. We just noticed that they were gone after some times and then we left for our homes. So even when we met them on the way, we never really talked about it afterwards. It was like we had never seen or talked with them. What we saw and talked about was left there. We would then put the plates in the hata and prepare to go.

Go where?

We were going back home. They would have finished eating their meals and we were going back. Yes. We did that so that the plates would not be seen by the guard forces at the keep gate. Otherwise they would ask us where we were coming from with all those plates. Even when we were back at the keep, the guard force would just walk into your house soon after your afternoon meal and then they would count the number of plates that had been used. Like here in this house right now, there are three of us right? If they walked in right now and saw more than three plates they would ask who had used the other plates. You could be in trouble.

U-m they counted the number of plates?

Yes. And if they were one too many you were in trouble. They would ask you who was using the extra plates.

Where did you get water for household use when you were living in the keep?

We got it from the well and from the borehole.

Were those within the keep?

No. We had to go outside to get water.

Did they check the water tin/container to see whether it was actually water that was inside?

Sometimes. But there were some guards that we were used to. They did not search us because they just recognized us as some of the people who lived in that keep. So we did not have a problem with those people in terms of leaving or going. The other trick that we had was that we would throw plates of sadza into the rubbish pit which was outside the keep and we would do all our household chores and get dressed. Then we went out of the keep and once we were outside we went to that pit and picked up the plates of sadza and put them into some other container and went away.

What about toilets?

We had Blair toilets inside the keep.

Every homestead?

Every home had its own. There were other toilets that had been built by men. But as you know public facilities are not very well maintained. So people never used them.

Did government people like Smith or any of his ministers ever come and talk with you while you were at Mbare Musika?

We never saw him. Never. Not even his shadow. The white people rarely talked with us black people. What more some of us who were coming from the countryside?

How about people from the city of Harare?

The people from the City of Harare were responsible for all the burning of zvikweshe because they did not want to see us in town. But because we did not have anywhere to go we resisted and continued staying there. Even when our staff had been burned down we still went back in the evening and spent the night there. If we were chased this afternoon and our staff was burnt we would still go back in the evening and they would find us sleeping there. Otherwise where would we go. There were people all over Mbare Musika. At the Machipisa store verandah and at the verandah in the big market, in all those places there were many people who were lying on the veranda floor.

Where did the squatter camp start and end?

It started right at the Musika (market) and then it went down to the bus stop where you find the buses that go to Mrewa and Mutare, went down as far as the Mukuvisi river, into the river and across the river. It also extended to the Majubheki area in Mbare. There were just too many squatters. It was a big squatter camp. The squatter camp went as far as Ardbernie. Yes. There were squatters all over that area.

How did expecting mothers manage?

They had to give birth right there at the Musika. Later you see would an ambulance coming to pick up the mother so that she could be checked to see whether everything went well. Those who were able and had the money had to call the ambulance when the labour pains started.

Were there elderly women at the camp?

Yes they were there because they were also running away from the war. The war affected everyone, but the majority of the refugees were younger women of child bearing age. Some of the older women were running away from home because they were accused of being witches by the boys. And yes, some were witches for real. Because when we were living at the squatter camp we saw a lot of things that we could not explain. Some of the old women always walked with their belongings. For example you would one person always carrying a basket. Wherever she was she had her basket with her. So we began to wonder what was in that basket. Or she could be carrying a bag. Wherever she was whether she is in the store or taking a shaower, she was with that bag. If somebody offered to look after the bag while she took a shower she refused. What kind of bag was that? What was in that bag? Some were caught with snakes. (In the Shona culture most of the witches are said to be old women.)

Were they beaten up?

Some were found with zvivanda. You know those birds which are called zvivanda.

What were those used for?

I don't know. How would I know? You could not ask those women. It was their property and they brought it with them. What could anyone do?

Nothing.

Why does she keep that bag on her all the time. What was in that bag?

Were the n'angas (traditional healers) as well?

Yes, many. The whole rural set up was now found in the urban area. N'angas were just like the other people who were running away from the rural areas because of the war.

Why would n'angas run away?

They many different m

akonas (traditional healer's paraphernalia) some of which were bad like zvikwambo (goblin used to make the holder richer or kill other people). So such n'angas were found out by the magandangas and they had to run for their life. They were killing many people using those zvikwambo you know.

Do n'angas also kill people? I thought their job is to heal people!

Those with chikwambo, yes. But the boys asked them what they wanted the zvikwambo for? Who did they want to kwambura (kill)? So they used to run away.

So who, between men and women, were largely involved in vending?

Men were shy. They were embarrassed to be seen selling at the market. There were just a handful who were selling at there. They started selling later on from '76, '77, '78, '79. From that time onwards nobody was shy to do anything. Otherwise selling at the market was seen as a woman's job.

So life at Mbare was something?

It was hard. Thieving and bad behaviour was exacerbated by the war and also the fact that there were too many people at Mbare Musika. The policemen were very rude. I cannot tell you of any one of them who was nice. When you went to them to report something that had happened, say you had missed one of your items, they simply told you to go back to your chikweshe or worse they told you to go back where you came from. Yes, those were the policemen. They behaved as if they were white people.

Was it ever possible that the comrades would also come and live among the squatters?

It was possible. They would come. But they dressed differently when they came to town. Like ordinary town people. For example they could wear jeans. Some of the boys lived along the Hunyani River for a very long time during the war.

When was that?

During the gukurahundi time. They even went to the farms. Whenever you heard that the (white) farmers' cattle were missing you would know that it was the comrades. The farmers' cattle was their relish. There was a year when it was said that there was no more meat anymore (because farmers had run out of cattle as the comrades took them)

You mean in the '70s?

Yes. Many people benefited from those cattle that were stolen by the comrades. I, for example, never had a shortage of beef because I used to cross the river and cook for them along the river and they would also give me some meat to carry home.

You mean the Hunyani River between Harare and Chitungwiza?

Yes.

Where were you living at that time?

I was living at St Mary's.

You were still cooking for the boys when you were living in town?

Yes. We cooked for them. But we chose people who cooked for the boys carefully because many people belonged to Muzorewa's (party). So we had to see who really belonged to ZANU and we went to them (boys) and met them. That was the time when they were coming to the assembly points. They were not too far. The river was full (of the boys), in Greystone Park, all those areas, Glen Lorne all those areas and Newlands. Those places were full of magandanga.

Which were the other places which had squatters during the war?

The other places where squatters were are – along the Railways, the Mukuvisi River. Now there were people who were living at the Railways permanently. There were many of them. There were also people along store verandas. People were all over.

Which stores?

Those stores in town and close to the Railways. They were afraid of going to those store which were up there (close to the Central Business District). So they ended on the verandas of stores of the outskirts of downtown Harare like those along the Railway Station. They were not afraid to sleep on the verandas. Thee veranda were full of people. There were also many squatters along the Mukuvisi River. There were also many people in the Waiting Room at the Railways.

I have heard about the houses that Smith build for the squatters I think if I remember well it was in 1976 or '77.

There were houses built by the Red Cross (in Chitungwiza)

No, I mean at Mbare.

Yes they build some houses. That place where there was Old Bricks. They build houses from blocks.

When were they build?

I am not too sure but people are still living there.

The houses are still there?

Yes. They are still there.

Where exactly are these houses?

There is Rufaro Ground okay. Then there is a Roman Catholic Church at Mbare Musika. In fact there are many churches in that area. Close to those churches there are small houses there which were built with concrete blocks. Those were the houses that Smith built. They took some of the squatters and made them live there.

Was there any other place where the squatters were transferred to?

Yes. That is what I was just going to tell you. The flats in the hostels were for men and later they changed that and began to have women and children as well. Families, yes. Husband, wife and children were now living in those hostels.

So people would just live in the same room - father, mother, daughters and sons?

Yes, all of them in one room. They had to make partitions with a curtain if they had it. It was just like what life was in the Old Bricks long back. There were four people in one room in the Old Bricks. Each corner had a bed and there were curtains in between.

In one room?

In one room.

Were there men and women in the same room?

No, they did not permit men and women to share. It was just like the hostels. So the women had to come and visit clandestinely.

Was that their actual wives or the prostitutes?

A properly married woman. What could she do when her husband was working and she was missing him. You had no choice but to put curtains. That was the life that people in the Old Brick lived (That was until the late 1960s when the Old Brick section of Mbare township was pulled down). And that was what was now happening in the flats/hostels. In the flats what happened was that I would get one room and you will get the other one. But in between the room there was a door frame without a door. So we had to look for a cardboard to close that gap. Then this becomes my room and that will be yours. But that also meant the other person whose room was inside had to pass through my room.

So that was how the squatters ended up living like?

Yes. What could they do?

Were did they put the men who had been living in those flats?

The men were just joined by their families and they all began to live in the hostels. At that time it did not matter that women were getting into the hostels because they now had the permission to get there. (In actual fact the hostels had been empty.)

Do you think that many of the people who were running away from the war went to live with their relatives or they went to live at the squatter camp?

I think $\frac{3}{4}$ went to live at Mbare Musika and the other $\frac{1}{4}$ was living with relatives. The problem was that, take for example that my sister. She runs away from home because she was sell out and then she decided to come and live with me in town! That was impossible. How could I do that when that meant that if I went back home I would be accused of harboring a sell out? You see now! The war-related problems from our villages were following us to Harare.

How would people in the rural areas know that you were staying with your sister?

That is why the mujibhas were there. They were the eyes and so they reported everything.

The mujibhas also fled into town?

Oh my goodness, what do you think? People were being followed to Harare. Even the magandangas followed people here. For example we have a certain man that was called Tongai Chita. He was followed by the comrades who wanted to see him. I do not know what his father had done. So he had to change the bar from where he went to drink from once he had heard that comrades were looking for him. He now went to a bar as far away as Highfield. They followed him to Highfield but could not find him. But all the same he was ran over by a car and he died. The boys were coming into the towns in broad day light. Some were getting married and they got their wives and left them at their parents' house or they would rent a room for them. By the time of the ceasefire the magandangas were working very close to the cities. They were not afraid of anything. They spent many days in the towns. By then they were now not afraid of the soldiers. They were now here (in town) and they also knew that they were winning the war.

So those people who went to live at Mbare Musika felt that it was better to go and live as a squatter than with a relative?

Yes.

Why?

Part of it was that some were ill-treated by their relatives. It was also because the relatives who had houses did not want to extend their hospitality to those who were running away from the war. He would say look where I am staying. There is not enough room for me and my children, what more if you joined me. It's true, there was just no space. Remember most of the houses for Africans had four rooms only some even as few as two rooms. So there was a kitchen, sitting room, and two bedrooms. So many relatives just took two pots and gave them to their squatter relatives and told them to look for a place to stay elsewhere.

So they just gave you stuff to help yourself with?

Some yes. They would give you things to use. But then again the majority of Africans were lodgers renting just one room. Some of the refugees were taken in by their relatives especially those relatives who had their own houses. They took them in and simply said I am looking after my relatives. But you know how our African life is like! It is just hard for relatives to share the same house for an indefinite period especially where women are concerned. Imagine for instance, a woman (madam of the house) buying bread in the morning, cooking lunch and then in the evening another meal, from her husband's money! That was hard. Almost impossible. So many people thought that it was better to go and live at Mbare Musika. Look at me, I am a good example. I left my father's house and went to be a lodger in St Mary's. But that is my mother. That was my father's house but I left. It's just hard for women to live in the same house.

What do you think that the Smith government should have done for the squatters?

Like what they did, to build a location for people to live in. The location they built took in very few people. It was too small.

Do you have anything that you want to say about running away from the war, your life as a squatter at Musika and living in Harare during the war?

I will say that to those people who haven't seen the life that we led at Mbare Musika and during the war in general should not let this country slide into another war (making reference to the inter-party fighting between ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front) and MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). We were suffering. When I am working I should not just work so that I only would have enough to eat. I should work so that my children will have enough to eat and be full. I know this is not an easy time but we should endure our suffering and look after our children so that they will have a good life. War is tough my dear girl. We should try to endure what we are going through right now because I know that we will leave Egypt for Canaan one day. People should not fool themselves. Even when the white people came here, they were not having enough to eat at first. But they persevered and succeeded in what they were doing. So we should work hard and make our own life from our own hands. These people (whites) are sitting pretty because we were working for them. These people did not do anything. All they did was give orders. Do this, do that. We should do things in such a way that we will end up working for ourselves. I tell you I have come a long way with the war for a white man to come back into power! Right now I cannot hear properly! I can hardly see, I have to wear spectacles. Now the lenses broke and I do not have money to buy new ones. I will not be happy to have the white man rule again. I suffered. My father could have died in detention. My uncle, my mother's brother, could have also have died in detention. (this was in reference to Mugabe accusations that MDC was a front for white people).

He was also in detention?

Yes. He was at Hwahwa. He was there several times. At one point he was released and then they took him back again. Then there was also another of my mother's brother who was also at Hwahwa. Right now one of them is at home and the other one is dead. My father went to detention at gun point when the magandangas were already in the country. He was at Chikurubi Maximum Prison waiting to have his neck severed. So no-one should say that we should hand over the country because of these problems (economic and political problems) that we are having.

Well anyone who wants to do that should but personally I do not want that. If we are to die I would rather we die without anything (poor). If this country is to be taken when the African race has been finished, well let it be. We cannot accept the white people right now. No way. When I get the land to plough (the land that was distributed after the land invasion) I should go and plant so that one day my children will go and work that land. If those people who are giving out land come and take away from me and also take it away from my children, they would have angered me here on earth as well as in heaven because I suffered. I saw a lot. Bhudhi (brother - making reference to Tsvangirai) is trying whatever he is trying, but he never did anything for us in this country. He is not offering us anything. If he is on a fund raising mission so that he could make a little money, well he should go ahead. He is not fighting for anything. He is behaving just what like what mukoma (older brother) Tekere (one of Mugabe's former minister who was also instrumental in the formation of ZANU) did. Mukoma Tekere was better because he went to fight for the country. But this brother is just on a fund raising mission. He should go ahead. We will give him the money. If you want we can start our own fund raising here. You just have to stand outside with this thing (tape recorder) and this place will be full with people. Do you know that? They will come. If you tell them that joining fee is \$10 000, they will join because they will expect things from you. So I do not want to hear about war. We should have a peaceful life. The leader who is in power right now should be allowed to rule so that we should have a free life because war is not easy. We ran away from keeps with dogs on our backs. We do not want to go back that road again. But we were a little clever because we knew what was going on. But this time it's will our children who will be doing the fighting. No-one had been sent for training. You should not be tempted by a plastic like a gun. Guns kill. Do not be misled by plastic.

Where does your sister live?

She lives in Unit E.

Is it close by?

There, yes I can show but right now she is at work at Chikwanha (Service Center).

On which days can I find her?

You can find her in the evening.

Around what time?

What time is it right now?

5 past 5.

She gets home some time after 6.

Does she go to work every day?

She works every day. She runs her own canteen at Chikwanha.

Are there any people whom you know who fled from war in the 1970s?

There are some. I will lead you to them if you want.

Tell me how dirty Musika was during the squatter days?

There was no way that the place could be kept tidy when there were so many people in such a small place.

Did you sleep right on the ground?

Not really we spread old jute bags.

On the ground?

Yes on the ground. Right on the soil. Otherwise where would we get the beds. It was just as well because we needed to dismantle it in the morning. If was dug into the ground like a permanent that would have presented some problems. We just made a very poor structure of a shelter that was very low just so that we would not get cold or have the wind beating on us directly. So that was our shelter. It was just so that we did not sleep directly under the sky.

What did you do when it was raining? Didn't the rain sip in?

You had to dig a small trench and then put your plastic into the soil and cover it so that the rain did not have to get into your chikweshe.

Thank you mama. Oh one more question, how were the people who went back to the rural areas received when they returned after the war?

You just went back to stay at your home. It did not really matter that you had been a refugee in Harare. Even Mugabe told us that we should go back to our homes. "We are now independent, go back home." But most of those who were sell outs could not even consider going back to the rural areas. They are among those who remained behind. In fact I think they are the majority. That was because we were now afraid to meet those people who had children who were killed because of their actions. So they remained here in the towns. Many were afraid to go back home. Some were accused of being witches so how could they go back? They were afraid to go back home because of the way they left, the things that they were accused of having done. They were sell outs, they had affairs with guard forces and they were given money by the guard forces. So they did not want to go back home. Some failed to go back because their homes were destroyed and relatives were killed in the war. Such people didn't know where to start. Going back was too painful.

Were there such people who were victimized because they did not support the war?

Yes. If you were not contributing to support the boys during the war then you had to surrender yourself to your colleagues and behave yourself. You could also go to the headman and pay your respects and do what others are doing. Some people were not buying food to give to the magandanga at home. Some did not buy clothes to give to the magandanga at home some people who remained in the rural areas were very bitter and they could not just forget about it.

Did you continue to support the war when you came to town?

Yes, of course. I was now a seasoned thief. I stole some medicines at Parirenyatwa. And sent it home. It was needed because there was a lot of cholera and malaria. So I had eyes to read and I went and read (the labels on medicines) and I stole. At the hospital gate they knew me. You

know this man who is called mupositori wekwaSandas (Sandas' apolistole), he was a guard (at Parirenyatwa Hospital) and he knew me as a worker at that hospital. We got along so he never searched me. I am pretty sure he knew what I was doing. People contributed towards the struggle in different ways, some by looking aside while we stole medicines.

Oh, so you mean to tell me that even those people who ran away from the war continued supporting it from here?

Yes, of course. We had to send some money home. We gave it to our relatives back there so that they paid it on our behalf. So we kept our register going. It was important. Sometimes we had to send the things to the headman so that he actually knew that we were still contributing. That way your homestead remained standing. There were some people who were running away from Mtoko and they came to Uzumba and they wanted to stay in our villages. Most of them just entered houses that had been abandoned and they were told that this house is owned by someone else, that is if you were contributing. But if you were not making your contributions the house was occupied. Some people actually used that opportunity to get homes in Uzumba. In Mtoko they do not have very good soils. But Mrewa had good soils and so they took that opportunity to come and live in our villages. So the chances that they would get the homes were high if you were not there.

What happened when you went back and you found your homestead occupied?

Who would you ask? They will tell you that they thought you had left the village because you are not making your war contributions.

Now you have said something that I have never heard! There were people who were refugees who fled to other rural areas?

Yes, and some fled to other peoples homes (in other villages or districts.) So if you left you gave somebody an opportunity to get good land. They would take it on the understanding that you probably ran away because you were a sell out. If I ran away because I was responsible for the murder of your father, and mother, do you think that I would come back and live close to you?

No. Who gave them the permission to stay?

Sabhuku told them you could stay here but the homestead is owned by other people. But he knew what was in his heart (that the owners of the homestead might not come back).

Okay so not all refugees fled to Harare. Some fled to other places, other districts?

Yes. They went to places where the war situation was better.

Does that mean that the war was intensified in Mtoko than in Mrewa?

What happened was this – whenever there was selling out, the sell out had to run away. So they had to go to places where they were accepted or probably not known. Mtoko and Mrewa are two places that are close to each other. There were a lot of businesses in Mtoko. Some belonged to white people while others belonged to Blacks so there was a lot of selling out. People like Pitt had stores in Mtoko.

Was Pitt a murungu (white man)?

Yes Pitt was a murungu. That was part of the reason why many people fled. He also happened to be a soldier. He used to go for call up. They used to kill people.

You mean Pitt and company?

Yes, Pitt and company.

Why did he kill people? What had they done?

He accused them of looking after the magandangas. Most of Pitt's stores were burned down by the magandangas. He was very angry. He could hear that my son was a gandanga and he would come and kill me. His son was also a soldier. He was a bad person.

And he was in Mtoko?

He was in Mtoko. He was also at Nhakiwa. He was at Muswe, he was at Mrewa. He had many stores in the all the surrounding areas.

Did he have a farm?

He must have had a farm because he had too many stores. Now he was angry because his stores were burned down. When the magandangas came they burned down his stores. They knew how cruel Pitt's son was and that was why they burned down his stores.

Pitt's son who was a soldier?

Yes he was a soldier.

So Pitt knew the rural areas a lot?

Yes he knew. And he could speak Shona very well. Pitt himself was an auxiliary, you know those police reserve. So he knew a lot about what was going on.

How did people who lived in those places where Pitt had stores respond to his cruelty?

Yes they did. So if you saw that things had gone really bad in your area you ran away to another area and when things got bad there you went away again to another village or district. It went on like that until some people reached Harare. There was no place that was really peaceful when the war spread throughout the country. You always had to look for relatives in a more safer district even if it meant that you had to go and live with a long lost relative.

How did the refugees from Mtoko who went to live in Mrewa get a piece of land to build their house and to grow crops?

Yes. Some lucky ones were given areas that did not belong to other people. It became theirs in a permanent sort of way. Then there were others who were told to build their small houses beside their fields. Those who only got stands to build houses were told that if they wanted to plant crops they had to plough the fields of people who were away because they were away anyway. But the owners had to be notified. It was impossible for the headman to refuse to give a field to someone who wanted to grow crops for food when the owner was away and he was wasn't using the field.

Were there many people who ran away from Mtoko to Mrewa but ended up in Harare?

Yes. That was happening. The war was hotter in Mtoko than in Mrewa. So people moved there. You see my child let me tell you, war was bad. It was hot. If you were a sell out you would get to this place and stay there and once you thought that people now knew that was who you were, you left and went to some other place.

Oh, I see.

Yes. If you were a sell out that was what happened. But if you had left Mtoko and came to Uzumba and you were a good person you would simply say that you would die together with the rest, I will die here. Sell outs stayed in many places. They would move on once they thought that their lives were in danger.

Weren't there others who were taken by the government and provided with a place to stay?

Where? We only knew about people who were resettled in the minda mirefu (literary long fields) the farms on which Africans were resettled after independence.

Oh that was for the sell outs?

No.

Smith did not take care of sell outs?

Where would he keep them?

May be give them houses in Harare or some where.

If they ever did that I do not know. All I know is that life was hard.

I have heard that in Masvingo town they built a whole location where they housed wives and families of district administrators, soldiers, policemen, agricultural demonstrators and chiefs who were being killed by the magandanga?

I don't think it ever happened here in Harare. I have never heard of this. Even in Mrewa nothing like that ever happened. From Chinhoyi, to Darwin going to Mtoko if ever there was anyone who had received such a house from Smith then his whole homestead and everything on it would have been destroyed. You know those boys who were called comrades could be really nasty. Because I would have gone and sold those people out and tell (the comrades) that that person has been put there. The way I suffered was serious. My legs were tied to a tree and I was dangling with my head down, for two hours! My baby having to suckle milk while I was hanging upside down like that and he was sitting down! Yes, I could not hold him on my lap to suckle. How could I have done that? I was being blown by the wind side to side when I was hanging in that position.

Did your head touch the ground?

My head was close to the ground. I was up side down.

Were you released for meals?

Yes. But sometimes we were not able to eat because the intestines were painful because of the position that we had been hanging. You know that lungs can be painful if you had been up side down like that for a long time. Then headaches! I had terrible aches. He (the soldier who interrogated them) would bring his palms together and pa – a double clap with both hands at the same time clapping both sides of your face. Or they would beat you with a sjambok and you would swing from that position. This is why I do not want to see another war. Please my children if you have the weapons, why don't you just put them aside and let the one who is in power rule. If you want to rule one day God will lead you and you will be the leader of this country. Don't ache for something that is not yours. War is bad. I saw it.

It was hard?

I think I should say that I have bad luck because I was born during the Second World War. But for me to see the actual war, to see a bullet going over my head, it's tough. I don't want to see that again. Let me end with the three (wars) that I have seen. We just fought for land that is the third war that I have witnessed. Just recently I was across the river where I had gone to see a murungu called Davis. We went and dragged him out of the house because he was refusing to leave. Right this year. It's less than four months. We got him outside the house. But my blood was clotting because I have experienced the war. But because I am used to the war, I had to do it. I said, girls if you really know what a war is, we would come up with a plan to get this murungu out. But he left and he is living somewhere else. (this is about the land invasions that began late 1999.)

Did you occupy his fields?

Yes we did.

Where?

Across from Davis, at Edenberg farm.

How many acres did each person get?

Two and a half.

So have you started growing crops?

We are growing crops.

You must be happy.

Yes we are.

So were the farms being given to people in the towns too?

Yes because they are urban farms so we were given small farms so we can stay there and grow on our farms. Last year we did not harvest much because there are many monkeys in that area. And if you did not guard your crops then you lost them to the monkeys. Anyway many people did not plough their fields. So the few of us who did had our crops destroyed by monkeys. There were also horwe (birds) and nguruve (wild pig/warthog) and mhembwe (kudu). This is why I am saying all those people who were given the land should be using it effectively instead of just leaving

it lying fallow. Some got the land and then they left and never came back. They do not want to go and farm. But for someone who suffered like I told you my child, I will try very hard to grow crops. My two children said that mama (mum) go ahead and grow your crops we will give you the fertilizer.

Oh that is great.

Yes. So I am not getting tired of planting.

So what did your sister do when she ran away from Mrewa (during the war)?

She came to Harare and I found her a job and she worked for some time.

What kind of work did she do?

Doing laundry for varungu. Then she also worked in white people's home. Then later on she quit and she decided to do her own business. By then she was so much into politics. She was living at Chirambahuyo. Squatter camp. So my sister started off by selling nyemba (beans) at the bar and until now she has her own canteen. She also orders things and sell you know those people who are called makoronyera (literary market people who cheat their customers). She is a koronyera. She has a very good life. She managed to extend her home. Both of us we have houses. Her children managed to go to school. They are also involved at the market. All of them are musika (market) women.

It's good to know that she is doing very well. But tell me, when she ran away from the war where you coming from the same area or she was coming from a different area?

She was coming form a different area.

Okay.

It was the same area although she was living in the village where our uncles lived.

So what was the war like in that area? What was she running away from?

The was beginning to be too hot but she argued that if she came she did not have a way of feeding her children since she did not have a husband and also that she was not working. So when I started working I also looked for a job for her so that she would be able to flee the war to Harare and still be able to look after her children.

She had already divorced her husband?

They had already divorced and she was living at our uncles'. I did not want my sister to live there because I had suffered because of the war. So I was always afraid that she might be killed.

So where did she go to live?

At Chirambahuyo (squatter/refugee camp).

How did she end up there?

Because she wanted to have a house of her own. As a young woman she wanted to be on her own so that she could invite her boyfriend over.

Did she have any children from her first husband?

She had had three children. One has passed and she now has two. Both are now married. They have wives. So this girl likes playing netball, she likes doing things that would give her money. She is very clever. I am not as clever as she is.

But I thought that you were very smart from the interview?

No, that was the time. So my sister is at Chikwanha shopping center at the moment. She has a canteen. She orders tomatoes and then some people will come to order from her.

Does she have a car?

The car was shattered when she was involved in an accident.

Thank you mama. (She starts talking and I begin to tape again) Oh you were talking about how you were injured?

Yes. I woke up early in the morning to go to the well to fetch some water. The soldiers were still walking around the keep. I had woken up early in the morning so that I would get clean water. I was supposed to leave for Harare that morning. So I wanted to get some water for my grandmother.

She lived in the keep?

She lived in the keep.

Was that the time you ran away?

No I had already fled from the rural areas but I had gone back to the countryside to check on my grandmother. I was visiting from Harare. I was already working by then. So I wanted to get some water for her and some for my own bath and for cooking my meal before I left for Harare. So I just heard a gunshot sound, but I did not feel the pain. The surprising thing was I couldn't lift my leg. I just sat down with my mugomo (20 litre tin used to carry water in the countryside) on my head. The water did not splash out at all. I did not know what I was doing. Then I saw them getting into the keep.

Who?

The soldiers who guarded the keep.

They had shot at you while they were outside the keep?

They had been outside the keep. I just knelt down. I could not raise my leg. It was heavy. They had hit my veins. So they took me and they said they were taking me to hospital but I refused. I told them that they had shot at me deliberately so why were they pretending like they were very nice people by taking me to hospital? I had done nothing. Why did you shoot me?

Did you go to the well before curfew time was over?

In the (keep) wire there was no curfew. Before 6 o'clock in the morning no-one was allowed to leave or after 6 o'clock in the evening. No-one could go beyond the fence. But I was inside the fence. They shot at me while I was inside the fence.

Why?

They were wondering where I was coming from. I was carrying a mugomo. Funny enough the mugomo did not fall off my head.

So what did you do?

They just lifted me to remove me from where I had been.

The soldiers did that?

Yes.

Did they ask for forgiveness?

I do not remember. You know you are in pain and you get angry because you are shot at for no apparent reason. Whether they asked for forgiveness or not I do not remember at all. I don't know. Well, I do not remember. All I remember is that they took me to a chimudhuri (guard forces' post within the keep). We called their base, where they lived within the keep, a chimudhuri.

Why?

Because it was fortified. They had dug out a big hole as big as this house. They lived at the base of that hole. So we called it mudhuri because they lived inside and they built their houses there and then they also built a wall of sand bags. They stayed there so that whenever a landmine was thrown at them it would just hit the sand. So I told them to remove the bullet.

It was still there?

It was still there. Up to this day if I sit for a long time it becomes painful. It's also painful on a hot day. When it's about to get cold or to rain I know because my leg becomes painful.

So what did they do?

They removed the bullet. They cut me open and then removed the bullet. That was the day that I wanted to go back to Harare. So what they then did was to give me a letter so that I would have a free ride on the bus and to go and get free hospital treatment.

Where were you treated?

At Parirenyatwa.

Where you worked?

Yes.

Weren't people at your work place shocked?

No-one was happy about it. Matron MacKenzie was very angry about the whole incident. She could not understand that soldiers shot at someone who was inside the keep. If I had been outside then you could have suspected many things. May be he shot me simply because he had never shot anybody so he wanted just the thrill of it. It was very painful. Up to this day I have problems with this leg.

Did you get compensation from the current government in the 1990s? You know that money that was given to people who had been injured during the war?

I never heard about it. The people who were writing people's names down never came to us.

So you never got anything?

Nothing. Not even a single cent.

Oh, I am sorry.

It does not matter anymore. That is what happens when you do not have a lot of school or when you do not have relatives in high places. What I am happy about is that at my home, my father's home that is, it is a place where I can go and do whatever I want. I have no problem. My father left a lot of wealth. He worked really hard after detention and now our home has a lot of things. So I do not have hard feelings. If I am to go there right now I will be looking after my mother.

She is still there?

She is still there and she had seven children with my father. So we are now 11 girls. Then there is my brother but he died. He had had four children. We had one brother.

So your stepmother had 11 children?

No. She had 7 children and they are all girls plus the 4 girls from my mother that makes us 11 girls. My brother was the 12th one. So because I have been given the land, I am happy but if I wanted to join the chimbwidos when they get something I will be happy because I worked supporting the liberation war.

Did you have your name written down?

We are in the process of doing just that. You know when we people are organizing anything. They just give their relatives only. But even if they do that I do not care They get the 2 bobo (very little money) but they won't know what to do with it because they do not have the brains. Some are lying you know. They were refugees who fled from the war while some were sell outs, now they call themselves anachimbwido. They do not have any stories or they can not say anything about their contributions during the war because they did not contribute anything. So you hear them stammering. They do have any war experience. But I know the whole story ever since the soldiers started coming in 1960 and we were uncovering beef cans from the ground.

Where would they have come from?

They had been buried there.

Why?

Oh people just being mean. They were leaving and they did not need them anymore and they did not think about giving the canned beef to people. You see the soldiers who came first, in the early 60s they were just white people. Black people were very few. So what they used to do was that they would come to you and ask that you exchange their carton of canned beef for a live chicken. They gave you a whole carton of canned beef. And they also gave you salads and tinned fish. They gave you a lot of those tinned foods because they wanted fresh meat, fresh chicken. They were getting tired of canned meat. They also had sea food. If they did not exchange the food they buried it underground. When they did that, most of us did not want to eat food that had been buried like fish we wanted things like beans because we knew that the other canned foods might have expired. So we got what we wanted and ate. When the war started we were very excited. We never thought that things would get so bad. But my uncles knew all that. So you see now. Older people who were more knowledgeable like my father used to beat us asking us why we were going about picking up food that had been thrown away. What if the food had been poisoned? They also asked us where we going and warned us that we might be raped by those people.

Did white soldiers rape black women?

They bribed them into having a love affair with them.

White soldiers?

Yes, white soldiers. You know white people had always had condoms. You know that kind, I am forgetting the name. Yes, I remember, durex. They had them for long such that they had affairs with African women without any consequences. They could even have sex with a married woman.

Really?

Yes. They told them to not tell. They also threatened them so that they would not tell. Back then people could be easily intimidated so that they did not say anything. We just kept quiet but we saw it all. So when they had gone we took our hoes and went to dig around where they had been living looking for canned food. Yes. War started long back. Around '58 and '59. That was when the war started. I remembered hearing rumours about it long back. The people who were leaders like old man Nkomo, they had political parties by then. People like Nyandoro and Chikerema were already political leaders. We did not know much about it back then but we heard our elders talking about it until we went to school and came across it. So when we came to Harare for school holidays where father was working we joined the zhanda of Harare. So that is what we did. We joined others.

What is zhanda?

That is what you call youths these days. They were called zhanda in those years.

When did you fist come to Harare?

I was born in Harare. But we used to go to our rural home. My father had a very nice rural home. It was made much bigger by Mr Mugabe but it had always been nice. We had a house made from unbaked bricks. But it was a nice house. We had a very happy childhood my friend. No problems at all. You could live wherever you wanted, at my father's house in town or at home in the country.

So you were born in Mbare?

No. I was born at Harare Hospital. That was the main and only hospital for Blacks. At that time it was not yet being called Parirenyatwa. It was called St Andrews General Hospital. (She made a little mistake. The African name for Harare Hospital was Gomo while Andrew Fleming Hospital was Parirenyatwa.)

Is that right?

That's right and that was long back before independence.

I thought you were born at your rural home in Mrewa?

I am a town girl. We used to come here (Harare) a lot. But half the time I went to school I was at the schools in town and the other half I was in the countryside.

So your mother stayed at home growing crops while your father worked in town?

Yes.

How come you were born in Harare?

That was because every time she wanted to give birth she came to Harare. Yes. She came to her husband for maternity because there was a maternity ward but none in our village. She was lucky because she had a husband who worked. Some pregnant women were unfortunate and their babies died during delivery because they could not come to the towns for delivery. My father started off as a garden boy then he became a cook, and later he was taught how drive by his employer until he became a driver at United omnibus company.

So when that bus strike of 1956 was held he was already working at the Omnibus Company?

He was already there.

Where there many women in Harare when you were growing up?

There very few women. Many women who were in Harare were married women. Then there were many women who worked kumayard (white neighborhoods).

But there were few women in the locations?

They were very few in the locations. They were there but few because in most cases the majority of urban workers were men. Even working women were very few, men constituted the majority of working people.

Why do you think that men kept their wives in the rural areas?

So that women could plough at home. So that they could have livestock and other property at home. Our parents had livestock at home so women looked after those. The other thing was that we did not always eat food from the store here. We brought most of it from the rural areas. Father's money was for sending us to school and to buy soap and sugar which mother needed back home. So that was the advantage. It was also because our fathers did not earn enough so

our mothers were helping by growing crops that were eaten even by the fathers who worked in town.

That must have been hard for the men to earn money that was below the cost of living. Yes. The money they earned was not enough although groceries were still cheap. Back then bread was 1 and 6 (16 pence), milk 9 pence. Things were not expensive. So we could have survived. But the thing was that men wanted their livestock. They wanted to keep their livestock and their homes and so somebody had to stay at home and look after them. Plus if you did not have someone there your land was taken and given to other people.

By who?

The chief. They were told to do that by the white government.

Was there enough accommodation for workers and their families?

It's true for those who did not have houses to live like the men who lived in the hostels. That is why there was a preponderance of men in town as women stayed at home. Those who had houses did not want their wives to stay here. They could only come to Harare after harvesting the crops. You know that time when there was no farm work to do in the rural areas. That was when wives followed their husbands to town and stayed until the rains come or in the cases of women with school going children they only went to Harare in August when children were on school holiday. Then they would come to their husbands. But they had to make sure that they left someone at home to look after the livestock as well as the home.

Do you think that many people who were running away from the war had money to rent or they stayed with relatives or simply became squatters?

There were more squatters. It was hard for someone in the country to raise enough money to rent accommodation in the city. There was hunger.

During the war?

Yes, during the war. It was hard to leave the keep and go to farm. Once you stayed in the keep your crops could be eaten by livestock or wild animals. And then there was a drought. So there was hunger. Because of that people did not have money to rent. But some came here and began vending and they raised money for food. And food was not yet so expensive as it is today.

Thank you mama.