



Interview with: MaSibiya (21)
Interviewed by: Nomkhosi
Date of interview: 8 December 2016
Travel: Ndwedwe - Durban

MaSibiya: I am MaSibiya. I am from Ndwedwe. I came to Durban after my husband passed on. My husband was killed. When I came here, I had to raise my kids. I started, because I was not educated, by selling *shibhoshi* (a mixture of water and Jeyes Fluid disinfection liquid). I sold it in all the townships, even the one which you said you grew up in. Maybe your parents used to see this woman who used to go around all these townships. I used to go around carrying *shibhoshi* on my head.

Then I got a piece-job with Indians. I worked very hard until I could not take it. It was too much for me so I went to sell at the beach. This is the main thing that I focused on. I began by selling beads and baskets and now I have a permit to do this at the beach. My table is working well. I have even got somebody helping me.

Nomkhosi: *Hayibo!* That means you are an employer (Both laugh).

MaSibiya: I found somebody to help me. I am sleeping here now but I can leave here and go there any time to check on how it is going. I came here to Thokoza while it was still 50 cents and I was sleeping outside.

Nomkhosi: Was that for a month or a day?

MaSibiya: It was for a day. Eventually I got a bed and a room so I worked knowing where I would be sleeping at night. Now I am very old. The problem that took me out of my home is not over—I still have the problem but I do have a home. It is not as beautiful as I would like it.

I came to the city a long time ago. By now I should have a house. I was raising my kids when I started working. Now I really wish that I could have a house and rest. It's not like I don't have a home: I have one. I have not gathered enough strength (referring to money) to build so that I can leave the city and stay at home.

I have a permit. The offices were at Stanger [Street]. Now it is at the beach front—as you turn and head to North Beach. It's not far. There is a park there, and the police and the office are behind that.

Nomkhosi: I think I can see where that is.

MaSibiya: We report our problems there and we pay for our permit there. When we register then we can come here.

Nomkhosi: How much do you pay for rent over there?

MaSibiya: We do not rent monthly. You can rent for six months and it costs R450. For the whole year it is R900.

Nomkhosi: You do that so that you can just forget about it and not be bothered.

MaSibiya: Six months goes by quickly and you try to save. The police come round and you have to show your permit. You feel as if you are being abused. If I rent for the whole year, I can stay here and save nicely. So this is what I am doing: R900 for the whole year. That's it.

Nomkhosi: How many kids do you have?

MaSibiya: I had one. He got married.

Nomkhosi: Was it a boy?





MaSibiya: Yes, it was a boy. I tried to pay *lobolo* (bride price) for him because I did not want to leave this world with him not having anybody to tell that he is hungry. So he got married, and I have grandchildren as well. My problem is the house that has not yet been built. But, because I am working, it is possible to do that. I wish I was already back home. But there is no proper house for me to live in, as I left home a very long time ago. In the city people say ... she is living in a house, but it is falling apart and worrying me.

Nomkhosi: Mmmm.

MaSibiya: That is where my life is, my child.

Nomkhosi: Where does your son live? Does he have his own separate house?

MaSibiya: At home I live with my daughter-in-law and the grandchildren.

Nomkhosi: Oh, so there are people there? Okay.

MaSibiya: He is working at the post office, here at Mayville.

Nomkhosi: And the granddaughter does not work?

MaSibiya: No, she does not work.

Nomkhosi: Okay.

MaSibiya: I personally do not like a granddaughter that is working.

Nomkhosi: This is a lucky daughter, who is loved so much. So you left Ndwedwe, and you did not live anywhere else before?

MaSibiya: I am from Ndwedwe—KwaNyuswa. I left there and never lived anywhere else. I came straight here to Thokoza. I used to sell here and ask to stay here for the night. But sometimes I would sell and go home. That's how I used to do it. When I got a piece-job with the Indians, I had to sleep here [at Thokoza] every night because I had to wake up [early in the morning] to go to work. Then I started working at the beach, being self-employed.

Nomkhosi: Where did you get *shibhoshi*?

MaSibiya: I used to buy it from a firm ... when you go to the King Edward hospital, before you reach Rennies, there was a firm that we used to buy from.

Nomkhosi: When did you stop doing that?

MaSibiya: It was a long time ago. I could not walk anymore. I would be walking for the whole day—township after township—with a heavy box on my head. This strained me. Then I got this nice job where I could just sit down and talk to customers. In the evenings I would pack up my stuff and put it in the storeroom. I would sleep and wake up and go and set up the table again. Now I am working well because there is somebody who is helping me.

Nomkhosi: Who is helping you? Is it a relative or who?

MaSibiya: It is a woman who is in need just like I am. She wants to raise her kids, just like me.

Nomkhosi: Where is she from? Ndwedwe also?

MaSibiya: She is also from Ndwedwe.

Nomkhosi: Do you know each other from here or from that side?

MaSibiya: We are from different parts of Ndwedwe. I am from KwaNyuswa and she is from the Mission area.

Nomkhosi: Oh, okay.

MaSibiya: We found each other here. She also came here because of poverty. As it happened, I also know poverty. I come from there.

Nomkhosi: How many times do you go to the beach?





MaSibiya: If she goes home to visit her kids, I go there every day. Once she is back, she is there. Like today, I am just resting because I am not well. She opened today and is selling. She will come back in the evening and say: “Mah, this is what was bought today.” Or she will say: “Mah, today nothing was bought.” It’s like that.

Nomkhosi: So if you do not go, she comes to see you every evening?

MaSibiya: Yes, she comes to me every evening.

Nomkhosi: Is there no way that she can rob you?

MaSibiya: No. If she robs me, I can report her to the office. If she does not do well, I can let her go and take another person.

Nomkhosi: Oh, that’s not a problem.

MaSibiya: No, it’s not a problem. Even at the office they said that it is not a problem. Although they have written her name on my permit that does not mean I am forced to keep her if she is not well behaved. When I don’t need her anymore and she is not doing well, I can cancel her name and put another one there. Yes, I will go to the office which we report to. The people who manage us there are Vumi Mchunu and others.

Nomkhosi: How do those people help you?

MaSibiya: They look after us.

Nomkhosi: How? From criminals?

MaSibiya: Yes, but also we report to them if we have any complaints. They are the ones who call the police. Now that they have been brought closer to us, now they are based in a park near Shoprite, we report to them about everything that we are not happy with.

Nomkhosi: Since you have been here for a very long time, can you now call this place home?

MaSibiya: Yes, I have been here for a very long time but I can’t call this place my home because I came here because of poverty. As it is, I am renting for this bed *ngiqashile* (I hire it).

Nomkhosi: Do you still pay rent?

MaSibiya: Ha! I can’t sleep in this bed without paying rent. *Ngiqashile*. How can this place ever be a home when there are so many people with different surnames in one bedroom? There is one person here with another surname. There is another one there with another surname. I have a limited space and the next part belongs to somebody else. How can this ever be a home?

Nomkhosi: How long have you been with these two roommates?

MaSibiya: The thing is, I am working and the other one is also working. That is how our work is. If she is not here, then she is not here. If I am here, I am here. If I am not here, then I am not here. But it’s not normal that there will be nobody here.

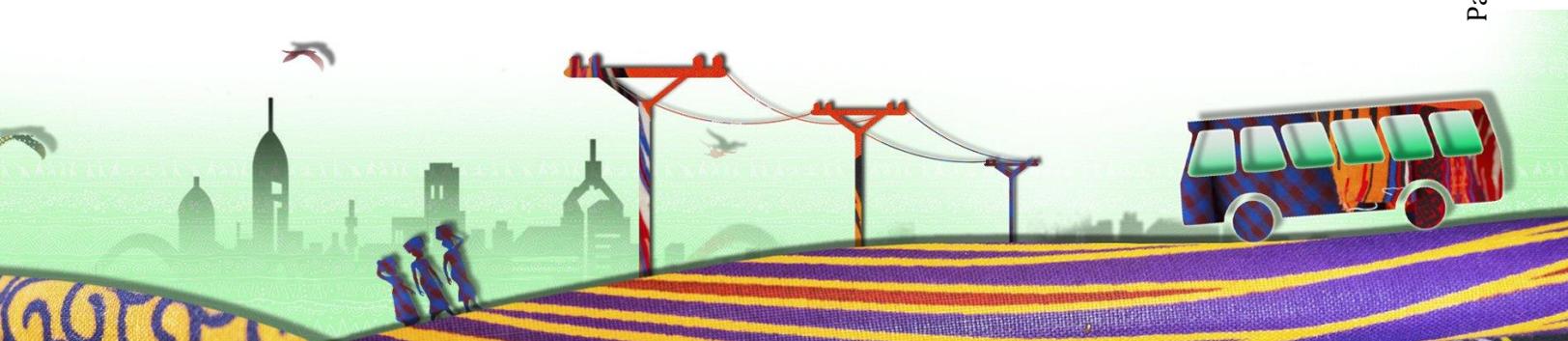
Nomkhosi: Can you in some way say that you are like a family? You live in one room in a very small space. So can we can say you are a particular kind of a family?

MaSibiya: I can say we are a family, which satisfies me. The three of us in this room are mature woman. No child can do as she pleases. When we say we are going to sleep, we are going to sleep. When one of my neighbours says: “MaSibiya, can you see that your stuff has crossed into my space?” I would then gather my stuff nicely because there is no one who can say that this is her house.

Nomkhosi: Who does this table belong to?

MaSibiya: This is ours. I put the wood on top so that the fridge does not catch fire.

Nomkhosi: Oh, this fridge works?





MaSibiya: Not these days. It needs fixing. A few days ago, some power station blew up and it affected our electric appliances. This is my space and my locker. This is MaNdlovu's and her locker. Mine is on the other side. However, because we are old, we live *ngokubonisana* (we consult/negotiate).

Nomkhosi: Do you share things like the fridge or does each have their own?

MaSibiya: Each has their own.

Nomkhosi: And what about cooking?

MaSibiya: Again, each person does her own thing. Each cooks anything they like because sometimes they cook something you do not like. Also, we are working so each should cook their own.

Nomkhosi: So you each cook differently?

MaSibiya: Yes, we do things separately.

Nomkhosi: Who was the first one to come to this room?

MaSibiya: It was that one in the front (pointing to the other woman in the room).

Nomkhosi: And who was next?

MaSibiya: Myself.

Nomkhosi: And then the younger one?

MaSibiya: (Laughs) Yes. (Everyone laughs).

Nomkhosi: Have you lived in this room since you came here?

MaSibiya: I started at the dormitory.

Nomkhosi: Where is that?

MaSibiya: These are rooms like halls with many beds—maybe over ten beds which are very close to each other. Even their lockers are smaller.

Nomkhosi: Smaller than these?

MaSibiya: Yes, smaller. You will see them next to rows and rows of beds. There it is very difficult. You will find somebody who drinks, and another who does something else and so on. You know, it is very difficult because we are really old now and in this room we do not have anybody who does those things.

Nomkhosi: So how did you move from such a room to this one?

MaSibiya: You would go to the office and tell them that you like the lifestyle in that room, so when a bed comes through in another room, then they change you.

Nomkhosi: Is this what happened to you?

MaSibiya: Yes. That's what happened with me as well. I stayed in the dormitory and I did not like the life there. One cannot sleep at a time that one wants to: somebody is drunk and making a noise and you have to sleep so that you can go to work when you wake up. So I went to the office and asked them to change me and they changed me.

Nomkhosi: How long did it take before they could change you?

MaSibiya: Once you are registered, it does not take a long time before they change you. But they tell you to go to a particular room and you will find a vacant place there.

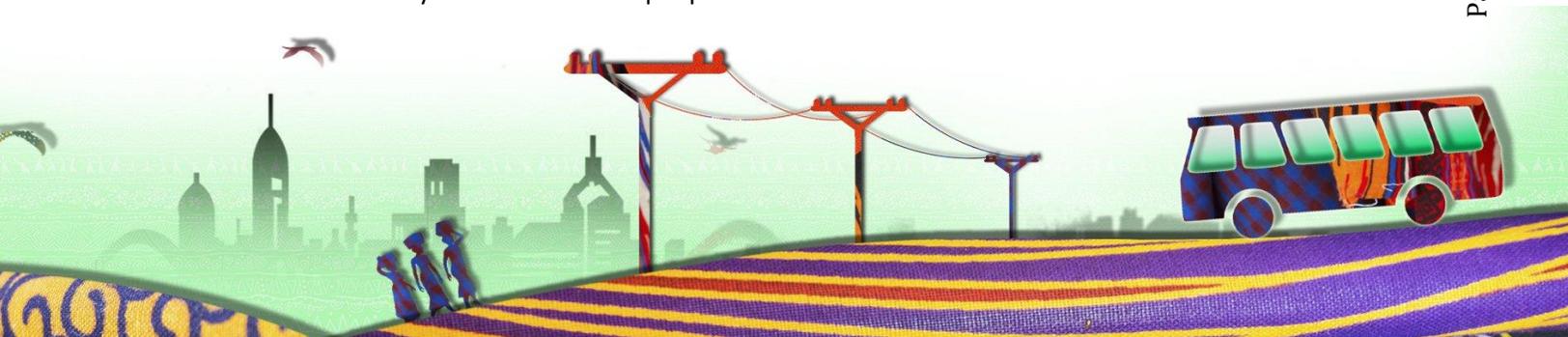
Nomkhosi: Since you don't live on the ground floor, do you have issues walking up and down the stairs?

MaSibiya: It's a problem now. It's even a problem on the ground floor because it's full.

Nomkhosi: But have you ever asked or thought of asking?

MaSibiya: No. I can see for myself. Downstairs we do have people that we know. It's important to first start with speaking with those that stay downstairs and ask them to let you know if there is a room available.

Nomkhosi: How are you related to such people?





MaSibiya: It may be a woman I know from church. It may be somebody I know from home. We would talk about such things—if there is a room when my knees can't take it anymore.

Nomkhosi: You said you are still trying to build back at home.

MaSibiya: I want to build now. Now I am not responsible for anybody and I have raised [children]. Now I just want to have a house that I will go back to where I can rest.

Nomkhosi: But is it true that you are not responsible for anybody now?

MaSibiya: No, it is true, my child. (Laughs)

Nomkhosi: I know you guys, ogogo. You have a tendency to continue taking care of people even when they are grown up.

MaSibiya: Even my grandchildren are old now.

Nomkhosi: Are they working?

MaSibiya: One of them is married and some are still in school. It's just that at Ekuphakmeni men are quick to choose and get married to kids. The other one was not working since she was still in school.

Nomkhosi: Oh, it was a girl?

MaSibiya: (Laughs) Yes, it was a girl.

Nomkhosi: But did she not get married to a very old man, because I know in this church ...?

MaSibiya: No, she was chosen by a young person. They met at school.

Nomkhosi: At Shembe, grandfathers sometimes choose young girls.

MaSibiya: That thing is not allowed anymore. The person who is leading us in church said that old people should marry old people (We both laugh).

Nomkhosi: So you all go to the same church?

MaSibiya: Yes. The grandson and his father and the whole family come to the same church as us.

Nomkhosi: Being here at Thokoza, do you go to church?

MaSibiya: Yes. There are many temples here in town. I can't even count them. And there are many people who go to the Shembe church.

Nomkhosi: You said you are busy with your house project. How long do you think it will take until it reaches a stage which you desire?

MaSibiya: If I could win the jackpot, I would be very happy.

Nomkhosi: Do you play it?

MaSibiya: I don't even know how to play it? (Both laugh).

Nomkhosi: So how will you win it?

MaSibiya: I don't think one has to study it (Both laugh). Should I take my money and go throw it away?

Nomkhosi: Okay, so what is your plan?

MaSibiya: My plan is to have a house at home. I want people to see that MaSibiya left when her husband passed on, and she went to work and this is what she has done. Yes, it's true that I have raised my children. But they are mostly girls and they will all go and build their own houses. When they do this, I would like it to show that she is born of a hawker.

Nomkhosi: Is there no RDP housing in your area?

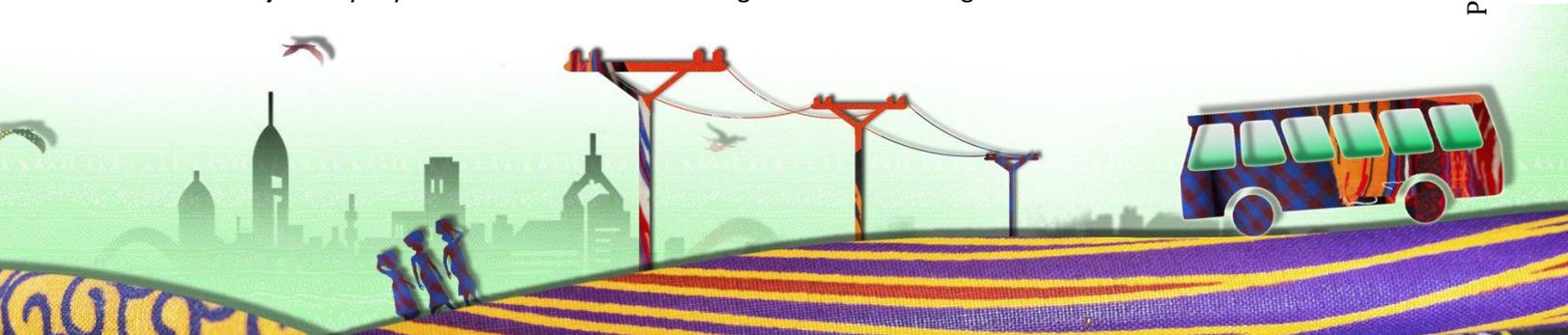
MaSibiya: No. This is KwaNysuwa at Ndwedwe.

Nomkhosi: Government housing?

MaSibiya: Oh, government housing. It came and stopped before it reached us. It stopped at KwaHlophe, and it skipped to KwaNodwengu, and we are at KwaNysuwa, iNkumbi.

Nomkhosi: Is that the name of the place?

MaSibiya: They say it's at Nkumbini. There is no government housing there.





Nomkhosi: How did it skip you?

MaSibiya: I am not sure because our chief is not very close to us. The chief has to agree that they can do this. But they have come and put taps.

Nomkhosi: Oh, you have water?

MaSibiya: Yes.

Nomkhosi: And electricity?

MaSibiya: I have only seen poles.

Nomkhosi: What is it like in the bright lights of the city to have electricity and water and everything so close by? When you go home to the rural areas those things are not there.

MaSibiya: I love my home more.

Nomkhosi: But life is so different.

MaSibiya: Now that we have water and they are about to put in electricity. When they say they have electricity, I am taking this fridge home.

Nomkhosi: What would you do here because you need it here also?

MaSibiya: This is not a home. I am renting.

Nomkhosi: But you need it.

MaSibiya: If God gives me power, I will buy another one for home.

Nomkhosi: You are just waiting for electricity?

MaSibiya: Yes. The problem at home is that I cook food today and the following day it's rotten and we have to throw it away. But here it can stay for three days fresh in the fridge.

Nomkhosi: I am curious to know why you don't call this home since you have been here for a very long time.

MaSibiya: It still does not mean that this is home.

Nomkhosi: What causes that?

MaSibiya: There is no rule I can pass here. At home I can say that I don't need this. I can't make any rules here. Here I come back from work and get on my bed. I can't go to the other side (other people's bedsides). There is nothing that can make me feel like I am at home. When I go back home, I go around the whole yard. I am also able to ask all kinds of questions. I can ask: "Who put this here?" and "Who put this there?" Here I cannot do that. When I see dirt, all I have to do is to remove it. I can't ask. I can't talk.

Nomkhosi: What else do you think makes you feel like this is not a home?

MaSibiya: I am still here because of work. It's not that I am free. You are here because it's closer to wake up and go to work and come back and sleep. Today I am resting because I was not feeling okay. Otherwise you would not find me here. Since I have somebody who is helping me, I can rest because I don't feel well. This place is for one to rest and wake up and go to work. One cannot be stuck here in such a small room. No, that does not make one happy.

Because I have educated my kids, my aim is achieving a house at home. That is the only house I need. I'm not here to raise kids. Once I have a house, others will see that I have worked. Because I am old now, I would tell the office that they should give others who are still in need.

Nomkhosi: How old are you, gogo?

MaSibiya: I am 45.

Nomkhosi: You are 45?

MaSibiya: *Hayibo!* I am lying (Neighbour laughs). I was born in 1940 so I am 75 years old. I was born on 2 February 1940.





Nomkhosi: When did your husband pass on?

MaSibiya: He died in 1988.

Nomkhosi: He died in the same year as my father.

MaSibiya: Your father was still very young and you were also very young.

Nomkhosi: Yes, my father was very young when he died. He had cancer of the blood.

MaSibiya: My husband and I had a good relationship and he allowed me to work. As I said, I started working a long time ago. I used to work while he was alive.

Nomkhosi: But were you based at home at that time?

MaSibiya: No, we used to live here and I am still here. Even now, I live here but I go home.

Nomkhosi: So you started working while he was here?

MaSibiya: Even at that time, I used to be here and go home. He was old by then, but I still did not want him to die because he had just turned 50 years.

Nomkhosi: But he was not too old.

MaSibiya: Yes. I had a good relationship with the father of my kids. It's just that he had two wives. Now the problem is that when you asked for something, he would say: "Ay, MaSibiya, it seems like what you are asking for is going to be heavy on me. It means that I must also buy it for the other wife." So I saw that and asked for his permission to work. I wanted to work for myself so that I could get what I wanted, so that I would not wait for him like that. Then I thought, no, I must go work.

Nomkhosi: And he agreed?

MaSibiya: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Where is the other woman? Is she still around?

MaSibiya: She is no more.

Nomkhosi: She followed her husband?

MaSibiya: No, she followed me. I am the first wife.

Nomkhosi: No, I mean by dying.

MaSibiya: Yes, in death they followed each other. I don't know if she died because of heart ache because of the way our husband died. He was killed during the violence.

Nomkhosi: Oh, it was those times [during the 1980s].

MaSibiya: Yes, it was during those times. She lost her mind.

Nomkhosi: Who?

MaSibiya: My sister (the second wife of her husband).

Nomkhosi: And the children?

MaSibiya: Yes, she had children and I lived with them.

Nomkhosi: I ask you this because you said you had one boy child but you kept referring to raising girls.

MaSibiya: My son has four girls and the fifth-born is a boy. He has one boy. My sister had only boys with only one girl and the girl got lost. Only boys remained. The sons now have wives.

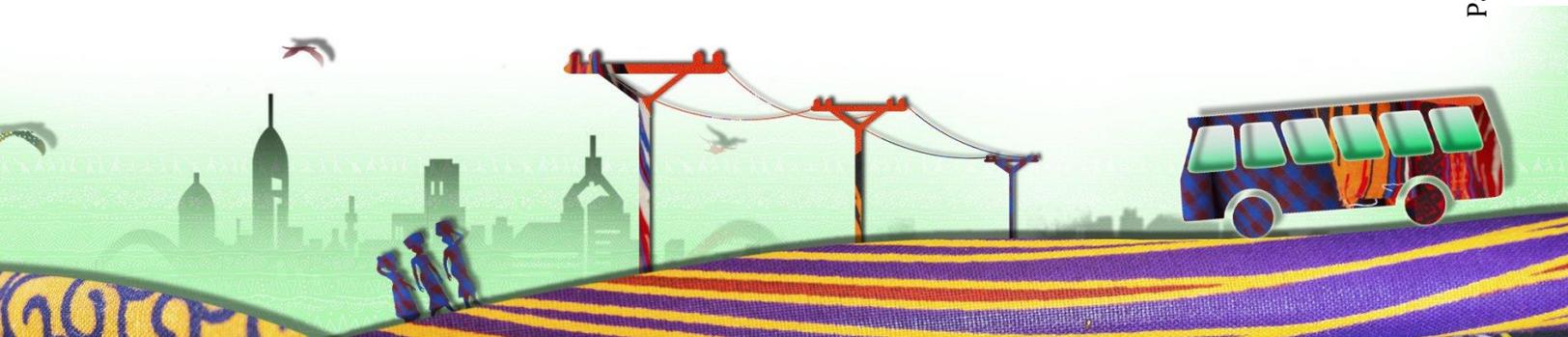
Nomkhosi: Did she die?

MaSibiya: She went missing. We don't know what happened to her. She went visiting her uncles and she never came back. When we went to her uncles they said she never arrived. And we didn't know what happened to the life of the child. We looked all over.

Nomkhosi: And you never found her?

MaSibiya: No, we never found her. Only the boys remained. We have a good relationship. I treat them as my own. It's good at home.

Nomkhosi: Mmmm.





MaSibiya: Yes.

Nomkhosi: So you were saying that your sister lost her mind?

MaSibiya: Yes, she lost it. The father of our kids died in January and in March, the second wife followed him.

Nomkhosi: *Hawu!* That must have been very difficult for you—people that are so close to you dying so close to each other and, worse, leaving kids behind that you had to take care of.

MaSibiya: Their uncles took the smallest child of that woman and I did not have a problem with that. He grew up and he came back.

Nomkhosi: Oh, he came back?

MaSibiya: Now they have their wives. There is no problem now. Now they only come to say: “Mom, there is a problem here” or “Mom, this is what we are planning to do.” As an old person in the family, I advise them on what to do.

Nomkhosi: You became very strong.

MaSibiya: I love the life in the rural areas. I love it a lot. It can never be like here. Here I am holding on because I am working. There is nothing that is nice here. But it’s good to be at home with many things. You work the land and eat fresh food that you take from the garden. You don’t buy food from the market when you don’t know when it was harvested. And it’s dead quiet sleeping in your own home. There is nothing that causes noise in the yard. Whereas here, you sleep and hear noise; you wake up only to find the kinds playing (Laughs). At home I can never sleep when there is still noise in the yard. I would call them in and say: “Come in. It’s dark now.” I feel sorry for a person who does not have a home.

We hold on because of work. I like to help my very own children when they want to get married. When the children of my husband want to get married, my conscience tells me that I helped my biological son when he wanted to get married, so I should help them too. My husband is no longer here and their mother is no longer here. Who will help them out if I don’t? What would those who are that side (who have died) think of me when their children do not get help, whereas I did help my own? If anyone says: “Mom, I am thinking of doing this” I would contribute something and say: “This is my contribution, my son.”

Nomkhosi: But it is also very expensive to raise children. You have done a great job.

MaSibiya: Yes, it’s expensive but I am done now. The grandchildren are their fathers’ responsibility of their fathers. That’s not my role.

Nomkhosi: Raising kids never gets finished.

MaSibiya: I must do something tangible now. Now I can give the grandchildren anything if they ask but I am not forced to look after them or clothe and feed them. I will shout at my sons if the children don’t have enough. I would ask them why they are not giving kids what they are asking for.

Nomkhosi: So your pension doesn’t get spent on them?

MaSibiya: My pension is my pension.

Nomkhosi: I don’t trust the old people so much.

MaSibiya: Where we collect the pension, we are told that we must put on (wear) what we like and eat what we like, and not to give it them. They say when we give them things, they will take [our pension] away from us (She laughs).

Nomkhosi: So what kind of items do you sell at the beach?

MaSibiya: Beads. I would actually like you to come to my table and see.

Nomkhosi: Do you also do beadwork?





MaSibiya: Yes, I do. I do it but now my chest is painful. If you come, you would see what I produce. I do all kinds of beadwork. I do the new design with scarves—the one called *intsebe*—and I do the one for the head. There is no kind of beadwork that I do not do. When you come to my table, you can come and ask me: “How much is this one, gogo? How much is that one, gogo?”

Nomkhosi: Who taught you to do this?

MaSibiya: I am a *bhinca* (Zulu traditionalist) by birth. I was born *eMangangeni*, and we used to do beadwork.

Nomkhosi: What is *ibhinca*?

MaSibiya: It is a person who is not from the mission who *bhincas*.

Nomkhosi: But now you have not *bhinc'ed*: you are wearing an apron.

MaSibiya: I have *bhinc'ed*. Can't you see my sarong [hanging next to my bed]? It's this sort of thing that we do beadwork for (Laughs). We used to prepare it for our husbands and they would accessorise them with beadwork and wear them to traditional functions. I have a permit now so how can I not do this for customers to see?

Nomkhosi: Why didn't you get married again?

MaSibiya: But I got married to my husband.

Nomkhosi: I mean why didn't you marry when your husband passed on?

MaSibiya: He died when his children were grown up. They would have asked me where this man comes from (Laughs out loud).

Nomkhosi: He was going to help you not to have a hard life.

MaSibiya: It would have been easy if I had found another one but he would have given me his own rules.

Nomkhosi: But your husband did that as well.

MaSibiya: He paid *lobolo* for me. He had to.

Nomkhosi: This one would *lobola* again.

MaSibiya: Bring *lobolo* to who? (Laughs) To my children? Ay, they would not allow that. Take their mother to another man and they would get another mother! I know they would not have agreed. I know very well (Laughs). They loved their father too much. Now they have fun when we spend time together. They all sit around me and I am also happy.

Nomkhosi: Okay. How much do you pay rent here at the hostel?

MaSibiya: Let me show you the bill (she moves around to the corner and looks through papers from under the bed). Sometimes I don't have time to pay every month and I pay for two months.

Nomkhosi: (Reads the bill: R138) How many months is this one for?

MaSibiya: How many months is this one for, MaNdlovu?

MaNdlovu: Tell her to look at that paper.

Nomkhosi: So you are faithful in paying rent. You are not like the ones who do not want to pay anymore?

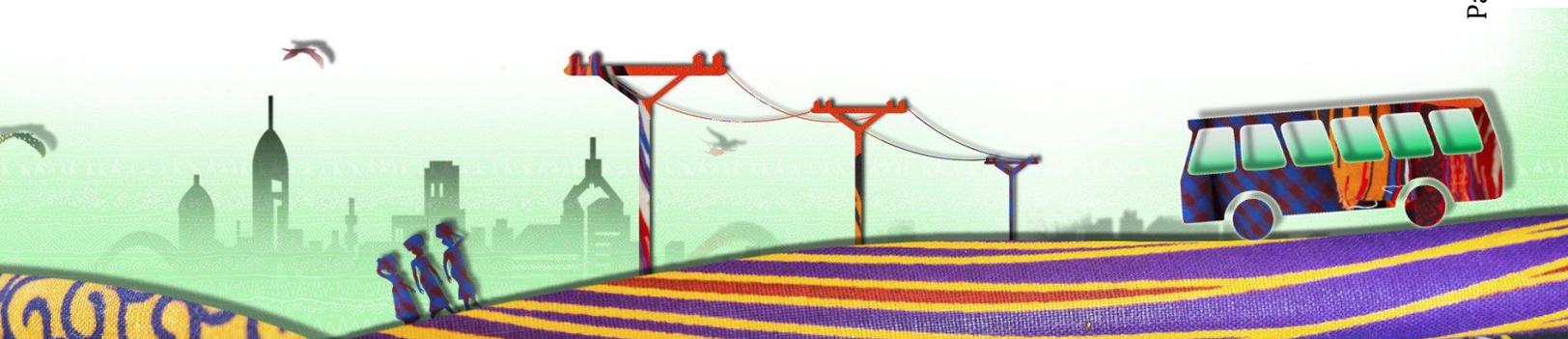
MaSibiya: (Laughs) How could you when you live in a place that is not yours? I know that I am renting here.

Nomkhosi: So you still feel like *isiqashi* (a renter) here?

MaSibiya: This is not my house. I am renting here. I am only happy when I reach my home and I know that I am at home.

Nomkhosi: How often do you go home?

MaSibiya: *Hawu!* I wish I could go every second week—one week here, one week at home. But sometimes I do not have enough money. It happens that I stay here for two months and I feel that I have been





here for too long without going home. I wish I could go home every fortnight just to see everything is going well. I would really be happy.

Nomkhosi: Do you and your kids call each other?

MaSibiya: Yes, they call me and I have their numbers. When I want to check how they are doing, I call them.

Nomkhosi: Tell me about the most difficult times of your life—since you came to the city or when you were born.

MaSibiya: I was born *ngitetema* (too lenient). My father never wanted me to work. He gave me everything I wanted. When I got married everything changed.

Nomkhosi: Your father used to spoil you?

MaSibiya: Big time. He used to say he does not want a child who would work. But when I got a home, everything changed. They asked me what kind of a wife does not know how to do things. But because everybody says that one has to persevere in marriage and that is what I did. So when I found my sister (the second wife of my husband), the old women used to say *kuyabekezelwa* (you have to preserve). I stayed and as the time went on, I saw it as normal. I saw it was all good and he was treating us the same. So I stayed.

I came to the city because every time I asked him to do something for me, he would say: “You know this thing you are asking for—I do not have money for it.” Then I would ask: “How come, because you are working?” He said that if he could not do it for both of us, he would not do it. So I asked to go work myself and he agreed, because I really wanted what I was asking for. And it was good for him when I was working. Sometimes he would even say he does not have bus fare, and he would come to me saying: “MaSibiya, I do not have bus fare”. I would ask: “How come?” and he would say he does not have it. So I would give it to him. I would give him and then go to work and buy him a coupon [bus ticket]. Anything else I saw and thought he would like, I would buy it for him. We lived a good life and we were separated by death. Even his children did not give me a hard time. They really did not. We are all on good terms and life is good at home. I cannot say that life is good here. *Sibekezelele ukusebenza* (We are enduring this for work).

Nomkhosi: What are the difficulties you had with your husband having a second wife?

MaSibiya: I would say that polygamy is like paper burning—you must not run away from it. It’s a temporary fire.

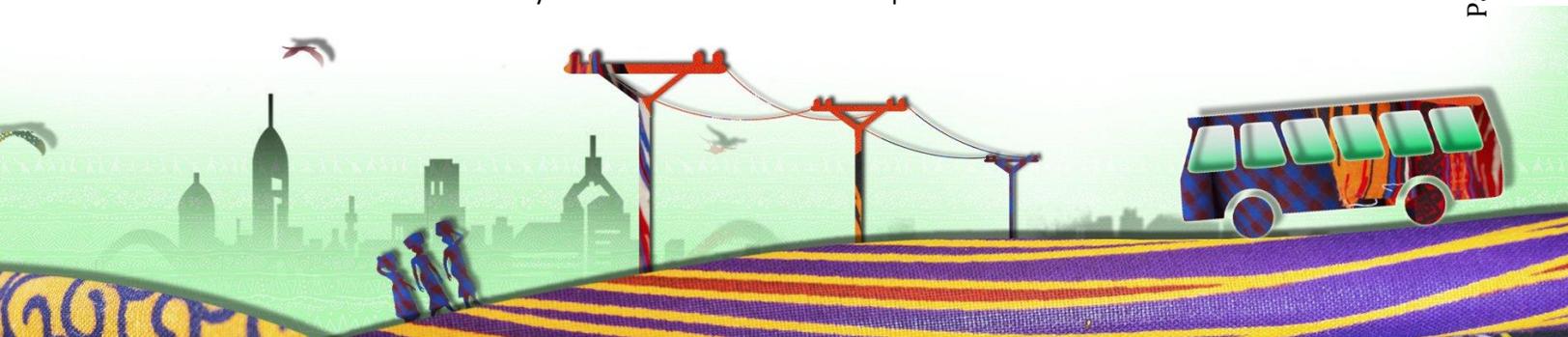
Nomkhosi: How is it temporary when a person never goes?

MaSibiya: It is temporary because they love her too much when she first comes. But as times go on, you are equal and the same (in his eyes). So when you are unable to [endure] that big love he is giving her (temporarily) you will find yourself in the gutter. Whereas, if you *bekezela* (endure), the situation will change and you will see yourself as the same and then it will be nice. You are also able to go to her and ask for anything. She also does the same thing and you live nicely. That is how it was a temporary fire. And, who would the children be calling ‘mother’? I had only one child and now my sister’s children would be calling me ‘mother’. It is because we stayed together *sabambisana* (we cooperated). I normally look around and see, *lukhulu usizi namhlanje* (there is a great deal of sadness today). A woman may refuse to allow a man to take a second wife but when the wife dies, the man is left alone and he does not know who will dish up for him.

Nomkhosi: What do you mean by that?

MaSibiya: It’s very painful if a male is left alone in the home.

Nomkhosi: So this means that you have to suffer and feel the pain?





MaSibiya: That's nothing. As the time goes on, you are equal and look the same. There is no one better than the other. He even buys you similar dresses and people say that the wives of Mr So-and-So looked nice. So it's only temporary.

Nomkhosi: But what about the fact that you can't get what you want because everything has to be in peace?

MaSibiya: That is nothing. Our prayer in church says that you must work. You must not have a sad face because of hunger when you have hands. So I left and started work and it was even better when I was working.

Nomkhosi: What about those who are never given permission to work because some men don't like women who work?

MaSibiya: Well, yes, he must trust that when you reach the other side you will not do other things. He must know that there is nothing that you will do on the other side. He has to trust you.

Nomkhosi: I hear you very well.

MaSibiya: You guys work with your husbands now.

Nomkhosi: Yes, but its normal with us now. It's not like in the past.

MaSibiya: You can get used to anything that you set your heart to. It is diligence. You have to be diligent because when a man allows you to go work, he will be following you and you will not know. He will want to see if you can be trusted. If he finds that you are diligent, there will be no problem and you will live a good life. So life was good to us. Our morning prayer says: Hey, why would you blame those who do not give to you? *Beka icala kwabakuncishaya, isimo esakho, uthabatha isimo sobunja, wena awusebenzi ngani- nazi izandla zakho nje, uzigcinele ukucela?* (Don't blame those who deny you, take the position like a dog. You have your hands you need to use them to help yourself?). So I worked and it was nice.

Nomkhosi: Can you talk about the passing of your husband a little?

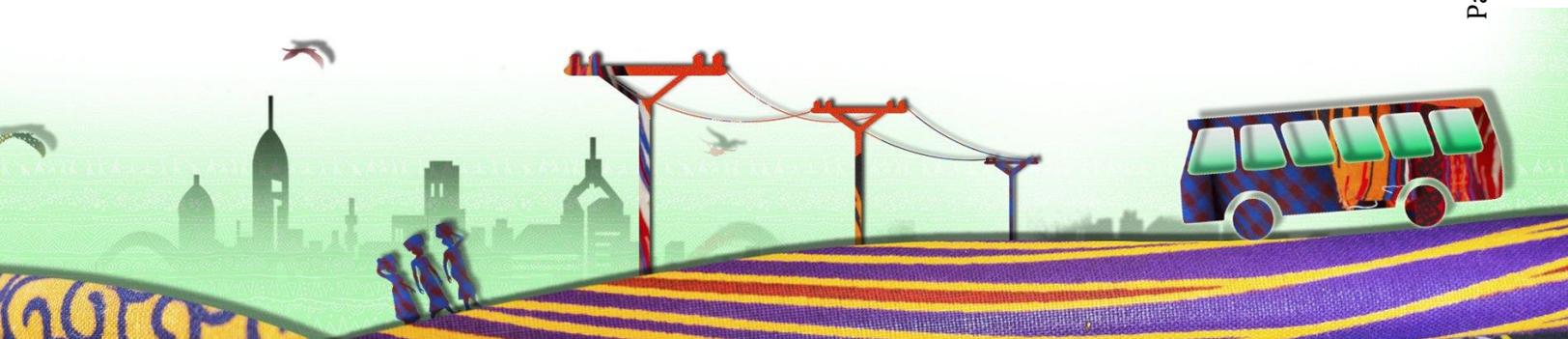
MaSibiya: It was at Ndwedwe. People perished. It was not only my husband who died. Actually, I think God helped me with my husband because they cut him (*bamgenca*) and I did not see a scar on his face. There were scars and stab wounds on the body. In the face, I saw that he looked like the father of my kids, someone I knew. Some people were burnt. It's so painful to see somebody who is burnt. My uncle got burnt and I can never take that out of my mind. His head became *imfohlomfohle* (melted and soft). I saw the tyre around his neck. I used to hear them saying you will be given a necklace referring to the wire from the tyre that remains in someone's chest. That was a very difficult time. I pray that that time never returns. The Lord should have mercy on us. It was really difficult, my child. We used to sleep in the bush.

Nomkhosi: Even women slept in the bushes?

MaSibiya: *Hawu!* They used to kill anyone. How could you sleep at home? They used to kill everything. I remember how we slept in the bush. You feel like coughing (making a coughing face but holding it back). They used to say we should put a cloth over the mouth because they will hear that we are [in the bush]. It was really difficult. Things do pass but I remember the picture of when my husband passed away. It was really difficult.

Nomkhosi: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

MaSibiya: No. I have lived well. I was MaSibiya and I never had any problem. My husband loved me afresh when I started working. He loved me like a young girl. I would bring him gifts and I would say "Father, this is what I have brought for you." Even the old people used to say to me: "Since he allowed you to





work, you must really be good to him because if he had not wanted you to work, he would not allow you." I still love the father of my kids.

Nomkhosi: *Hawu*, shame, even my mother always says that. My father passed away a very long time ago but she still always says that.

MaSibiya: I still love him even now. He would joke with me and I would be happy. I still remember some of the things that he used to say to me. He used to say: "I am writing and you are erasing. I am covering you with a blanket and you are uncovering yourself." (Both laugh)

Nomkhosi: What is it that you were doing when he said that?

MaSibiya: He was just kidding with us so that we would be happy and laugh. It was really beautiful. There was no problem. That is why I still love my home even now. It is because I have not run out of the love I had for the father of my children.

Nomkhosi: Mmmm.

MaSibiya: With my children, when I say you are like your father, they laugh and they are happy.

Nomkhosi: Mmmm.

MaSibiya: It seems like that is where I am ending.

Nomkhosi: Thank you very much, gogo. Thank you for sharing your life story with me.

MaSibiya: Now you can talk to the others because we are not from the same area. This one has her table across the road. She keeps on going out to check on it.

Nomkhosi: That means she is also an employer now (All laugh).

