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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH44.v2.4>

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Southern Journal for
Contemporary History
2019 44(2):74-95

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MEMORIES OF VICTIMS: THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF THE REMOVAL OF PEOPLE FROM MANDLANZINI, SOUTH AFRICA.

Abstract

The history of forced removals and Bantustan consolidation in South Africa speak to issues of dispossession and disenfranchisement. The history of South Africa between 1948 and 1994 was characterised by widespread removal of communities from their traditional areas of domicile to different areas. In spite of the prevalence of such removals, very little is written on the experiences of the victims and agency or resilience they demonstrated. This paper follows the history, experiences and memories of a black community that was removed when Richards Bay was established. It argues that these people were not relocated for their betterment but to open up space for white settlement and to create economic enclave dominated by whites.

Keywords: Mandlanzini, forced removal, Mthiyane community, apartheid, dispossession and marginalisation

1. INTRODUCTION

The apartheid system which the National Party started to establish in 1948 pursued two main goals: sustaining political supremacy and promoting economic prosperity of the white minority who were less than 20% of the total population.¹ However, these goals were based on an inherent tension. The political supremacy required marginalising of African majority while at the same integration of African workers to satisfy industries'

¹ F Wilson and M Ramphela, *Uprooting Poverty in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1989), p. 208.

growing demands for cheap labour.² In particular, South Africa's mineral-driven industrialisation in the first half of the twentieth century increased demands for labour in cities, leading to growing African urban settlements. Whites feared that this would create a critical mass political mobilisation of urban workers that would threaten political stability. This tension explains why the apartheid system was neither stable over time nor followed a linear development trajectory. Instead, from the period when the National Party came into power in 1948 to the first democratic elections in 1994 represents three different phases reflecting power shift between the purists favouring total segregation and the pragmatists, who focused on economic development.³

At least three developments led the apartheid regime to shift course to implementing more rigid segregationist policies throughout the 1950s. First, the National Party realised that the pragmatists' approach of regulating the movement of African labour through a labour bureau system failed to establish control over the allocation of African workers.⁴ Overcrowding and poverty on reserves assigned to Africans had led to urban migration. As a result, African urban population grew by 50% and political protest increased during the 1950s. Secondly, the government faced growing pressure from white farmers to remove Africans from their land. White farmers wanted more fertile land. While this politically powerful group had previously relied on large numbers of unskilled workers, increased mechanism of agricultural production in the middle of the 20th century shifted the demand to a smaller and more highly skilled workforce to operate new machines and thus create labour surplus on farms.⁵ Thirdly, in the context of decolonisation of other parts of Africa, international opposition to apartheid's racism increased.

Consequent to the above developments, the apartheid government passed a legislation that formed legal basis of the Homeland or Bantustan system. The Group Areas Act of 1950, which tried to create ethnically homogenous townships outside the cities and forcefully removed people according to their racial classification, as codified in the Population Registration Act of 1950.⁶ The Bantu Authorities Act of 1950 and the Bantu Resettlement Act of 1954 created ten separate ethnic homelands: KwaZulu (Zulu ethnicity), Transkei and Ciskei (Xhosa), Venda (Venda), Bophuthatswana (Tswana), Gazankulu (Tsonga),

2 Wilson and Ramphela, *Uprooting Poverty in South Africa*, p. 209.

3 For further reading, see, D O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996).

4 D Posel, "The Apartheid Project 1948-1970". In: R Ross *et al.* (eds.), *Cambridge History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 319.

5 L Platzky and C Walker (ed.), *Surplus People* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), p. 38.

6 N Natras and J Seekings, "The Economy and Poverty in the Twentieth Century". In: R Ross *et al.* (eds.), *Cambridge History of South Africa*, Volume 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 518.

Lebowa (Sotho), Qwaqwa (Sotho), KaNgwane (Swazi), KwaNdebele (Ndebele). The designated homelands present only small fragments of the designated ethnic groups. The highly contoured and fragmented shape of homeland territories, which were largely based on the native reserves demarcated in the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, show that the siting of homelands was determined by the interests of white farmers and location of mineral deposits rather than by historic tribal areas as claimed by the apartheid regime.⁷

The Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 and Bantu Homeland Constitution Act of 1971 established political separation of Bantustans; inhabitants became “citizens” of their respective homelands and were thus, regarded as foreigners in South Africa.⁸ Even if a person was not living in or had not been to any homeland, he or she was declared a citizen of the homeland where his or her language was spoken. With this legislation, black people became aliens in their own country of birth. The regime justified these reforms by adopting the rhetoric of “separate development” and even “decolonisation” claiming that these policies would grant self-determination to nations within borders of their historic homeland.⁹ However, only four of the ten homelands (Transkei, Venda, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana) subsequently accepted “independence” status between 1976 and 1981. This system of “independent nations” served as justification for a large scale removal of people and became the bedrock of large scale spatial segregation – grand apartheid. Particularly, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the government forcefully removed Africans from “white areas” to homelands and controlled the inflow of people into cities through a pass system. While the exact statistics do not exist, most studies estimate that a total of at least 3.5 million people were removed to Bantustans within a decade.¹⁰ This paper will focus on the Mthiyane people who were forcibly removed from Mandlanzini, present day Richards Bay.

While it is common to associate segregation and these forced removals to the apartheid regime due to the role it played in the implementation of the rigorous segregation policy and forced removals, it is worth noting that these policies of dispossession and segregation had started before the National Party came into power and introduced apartheid legislation.¹¹ Examples of the pre-apartheid legislation that alienated land from black people include the 1913

7 C Desmond, *The Discredited People* (London: Penguin Press, 1971), p. 17; L Thompson, *A History of South Africa* 3rd Edition (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 4.

8 AK Mager and M Mulaudz, “Popular Response to Apartheid: 1948–1975”. In: R Ross et al. (eds), *Cambridge History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 3.

9 J Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (Oxford University Press: USA, 2016), p. 23.

10 E Unterhater, *Forced Removal: The Division, Segregation and Control of People in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa, 1987), p. 56.

11 “Anon.”, Surplus People Project (South Africa), 1983, p. 31.

Native Land and the 1936 Native Trust Land Act.¹² These laws served to limit the freedom of all black people by controlling their movement, limiting their power to own land or businesses and exploiting their labour to the benefit of white South Africans. Some of apartheid's most oppressive laws were built upon earlier regulations that sought to control the movement and the rights of all who were not white. One example is the, 1925 Areas Reservation Bill which sought to restrict Indians.¹³ However, it was the Group Areas Act of 1950 that formalised and rigorously implemented forced removals from urban areas on an enormous scale.

Laurine Platzky and Cheryl Walker published a book in 1984 entitled *Surplus People*, in which they refer "surplus people", to those black people who were forcibly removed from their land. From the investigations reported in their book, Platzky and Walker tell us that from 1960 to 1982 about 3.5 million people were forcible removed from their homes and land and dumped in barren and uninhabitable areas.¹⁴ During this period, tens of thousands of children died as their families were forcibly moved and exposed to harsh conditions.¹⁵ Excessive and brutal force was used to have the policy of separateness implemented. The irony of the system was often captured in the names given to the new places where black people were dumped. Names given to the townships included, Boipatong (hiding place), Bophelong (the place of life), Gugulethu (our heritage), Impumelelo (success), Masiphumelele (let us succeed), Refengko (give us peace), Seshogo (African basket), and Thokoza (place of joy).¹⁶ These names were coined to express happiness and safety for the victims. In terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and later 1957, various people in the country were assigned to different residential townships and places in the Bantustan.¹⁷

The government masked the policy of forced removals under the cloak of peace and prosperity for all. It had a well-orchestrated strategy of making people move from their land to where they wanted to move them. In their "reasoning" forced removals were beneficial to both black and white people. The government felt that, it made the biggest mistake for undertaking resettlement actions without co-operating with black communities. A lack of consultation between the government and black people led to numerous unfortunate incidents.¹⁸

12 A Baldwin, "Mass Removal and Separate Development", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1 (2), 1975, p. 215.

13 A Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of Group Areas Act and Its Planning Apparatuses", *Journal of African Studies* 18 (2), 1992, p. 405.

14 Platzky and Walker, *Surplus People*, p. 1.

15 J Pilger, *Freedom Next Time: Resisting the Empire*. (New York: Ntion Books, 2007), p. 179.

16 Platzky and Walker, *Surplus People*, p. 3.

17 A township is a racially segregated area in South Africa established by the government as a residence for people of colour.

18 Platzky and Walker, *Surplus People*, p. 4.

In order to avoid international condemnation and black resistance, the government had to “persuade” black leaders through bribes and other means in a “divide and rule strategy” to get black South Africans to move. Chiefs were given incentives such as better houses at the new areas, money and farming equipment. After inducing the chief to agree to the policy, they termed it a “consultation” process but where there was resistance, the government did not hesitate to use drastic measures such as selective sanctions like cutting off essential services and sometimes banning community meetings. In some cases, Homeland governments were used to help to achieve government objectives. The Homeland leaders, such as General Oupa Gqozo, Kaizer Mathanzima and Lucas Mangope were instructed by their masters in Pretoria to go and convince the communities who refused forced removals to relocate.¹⁹ It was within this period, 1960 to mid1980s, of forced removal through the use of subtle and drastic measures that the Mthiyane people of Mandlanzini were relocated.²⁰ This community was forcibly removed from their area of origin (Mandlanzini) and was relocated to Ntambanana, an inhospitable and arid land of 69.1 kilometres north-west of Richards Bay where they could not even till the soil. Like many other affected communities, for example in Sabokwe and Bhenghazi, today, they cohere around memories of their historical suffering, fortitude, courage and survival.

In the following essay, I pose and address, a number of questions salient to the removal of the Mthiyane people: What were the reasons that led to the removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini? How did the Mthiyane people react to forced removals? How was the life of the Mthiyane people at Ntambanana? And what were the measures taken by the Mthiyane people to reclaim their lost land in Mandlanzini and what happened thereafter? A study of literature indicated that little is written about the removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini to Ntambanana. It was for this reason that this study had to rely mainly on oral interviews and newspaper cuttings. Oral interviews, however, have strengths and limits. One of the strengths of oral interviews is to supplement or aid our interpretation of written sources. Through oral evidence the researcher may be able to reveal evidence which might not be obtained from any other source. Further, oral interviews may give the researcher the autonomy to ask questions that may never have been asked in the past and also open new areas of research.²¹ One of the limitations of oral interviews, especially from eye-witnesses, is that evidence does not remain fixed or consistent overtime. Some parts of the narrative are typically confused – the sequence of events is often

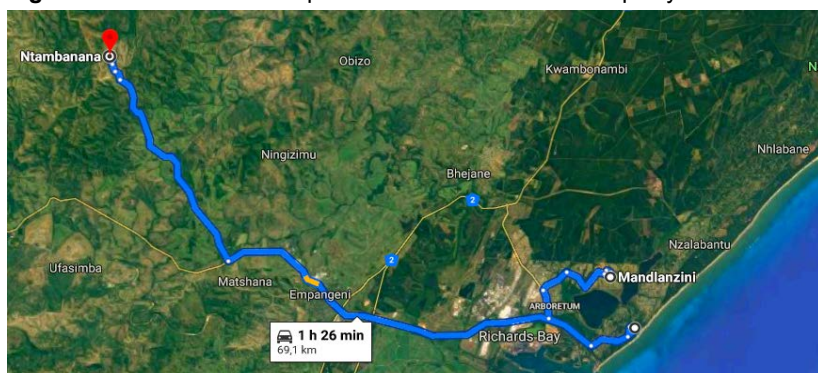
19 A Manson and M Lawrence, “The Dog of the Boers: The Rise and Fall of Lucas Mangope in Bophuthatswana”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20 (3), 1994, p.451.

20 Mthiyane is a clan name for Zulu people originally resided on the South-Eastern shores of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

21 WH McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (London: Longman, 2002), pp. 59–60.

jumbled, the perception of time and distance distorted, and the sense of a wider narrative obscured. Umhlathuze Local Municipality represented the research field for this study. It is an administrative area in the King Cetshwayo District Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This municipality is named after the Umhlathuze River which flows eastwards across the municipality to the sea, its flood-water filling a large number of pans which provide a breeding ground for waterfowl and a variety of fish. It covers an area of 793 square kilometres with a population of more than 300 000.²² The population is mixed, according to the race classifications still used in South Africa to track racial transformation. IsiZulu is the most spoken language followed by English and Afrikaans. Today, most people depend on migrant labour for a living. But in the past, they depended on agriculture. It is one of the best-favoured regions of KwaZulu, with its high rainfall (1 500mm a year), its tropical fruits (bananas, avocados, paw paws), its forests and its fishing potential, in both the sea and Lake Mzingazi.²³

Figure 1: Map of Umhlathuze Local Municipality



The above figure depicts Umhlathuze Local Municipality; the location of the study. <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/umhlathuze>, accessed on 12 May 2018.

2. LIFE AT MANDLANZINI PRIOR FORCED REMOVAL, 1976

Life at Mandlanzini before 1976 was based on farming, cattle rearing, hunting and gathering. The forest provided a very good place to grow vegetables, as the land was rich. Farming was mainly subsistence. The men speared fish from the nearby

22 <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=umhlathuze+municipality>, accessed on 29 November 2019.

23 "Anon." AFRA, Report No. 12, September 1981.

Mzingazi Lake. Men and women gathered fruits while young boys looked after cattle, which were a measure of wealth and power. Men needed cattle also for bride price (*lobolo*). The green pastures around Mzingazi Lake provided grazing land for cattle. Their land which they planted with saligna gumtrees made them more prosperous than any other Zulu community.²⁴

Some of the local men earned their living by forestry. They sold trees to big timber mills in the nearby firms controlled by the whites. The swampy lowland soil near the sea was ideal for growing revenue-earning blue gum trees.²⁵ Women used ox-drawn ploughs or iron forged hoes to plant sweet potatoes, maize, pumpkins, millet, peanuts, and cabbage. They also moved to nearby Mozi River near St Lucia to harvest *incema* (*juncus kraussii*) or special grass to weave baskets and Zulu mats. Before the forced removal, the majority of the Mthiyane people at Mandlanzini did not depend on migrant labour. However, after relocation to Ntambanana this situation changed dramatically as most men were forced to leave their families for months in search for jobs far away from their homes.²⁶

The Mandlanzini community was bound by strong traditional beliefs and fell under traditional authorities which were easy to identify by hereditary clans. There was finely drawn distinction between social and political structures of traditional institutions. From 1872, during the reign of King Cetshwayo, the son of King Mpande, the Zulu Kingdom was divided into two broad systems, namely the social system and the power of the state.²⁷ The social system was based on production while the power of the state was based on the military. This saw the emphasis on the homestead-head (the male) or *ikhanda*, including the *inkosi*, *amakhosi*, *izinduna*, *izikhulu* and *ibandla*. These traditional structures have in due course been transformed into *isilo* (His Majesty the king), *inkosi* (chief), *induna* (headman), and *ibandla* (traditional council).²⁸ Headmen have the responsibilities of being “eyes and ears” of the *inkosi* on the ground, and this form the basis of the local authority.

3. FORCED REMOVALS

Almost everyone who could remember the forced removal which happened on 6 January 1976 of the people from Mandlanzini recalled similar memories vividly as these of Pretty Sokhulu. During my interview with Sokhulu now in her 70s, she broke down in tears as she recalled this fateful day almost as if it were yesterday. Sokhulu said that, her people now lived in poverty and misery because

24 Interview: Author with M Mthiyane, 28 April 2017.

25 *Durban Bureau*, 19 December 1970, p. 9.

26 Interview: Author with M Sibiya, 10 June 2018.

27 J Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1994), p. 22.

28 For the purpose of this study, the word chief will be used to refer to the king or *inkosi*.

of dispossession and detachment from their ancestral land. She remembered an idyllic life at Mandlanzini where there was plenty of food and in her words “people were not sick”.²⁹ Although they lived a subsistence-farming lifestyle, everyone, when asked, acknowledged that they were healthy because they were eating fresh food direct from the soil. At that time, of course diseases like Human Immunodeficiency Virus, were not known at Mandlanzini. People ate traditional food which kept them healthy, according to Pretty. One of them, Simon Sokhulu, yearningly remembered. “We could plant anything and it would grow and we would eat”.³⁰ For the Mthiyane people, “we lived a tranquil and prosperous life at Mandlanzini and the last thing we would have desired was to have our lives disrupted”.³¹ This suggests that, people “remember” some parts of past in highly idealised ways.

4. GOVERNMENT PLANS AND EVENTS PRECEDING FORCED REMOVAL SINCE 19TH CENTURY

In the nineteenth century, colonial interest in the region was propelled by the imperial government’s interest in coal deposits on the South- Eastern shores of Africa (1890) and for a viable British harbour north of the Thukela River. It was Zululand Port Survey by Cathcart Methven, the harbour engineer of the Natal Government in 1902 that really drew attention to the potential of Richards Bay as the new harbour for the south east Africa.³² This in the long run resulted in the establishment of the modern harbour which led to the removal of the Mthiyane people from the area. The construction of the harbour at Richards Bay (Mandlanzini) would be used as a justification for the removal of more than six thousand people and above five thousand head of cattle and goats to a reserve in Ntabanana. The removal was expected to be complete before the harbour was officially opened by the Prime Minister John Vorster on 1 April 1976.

As the first industrial giant of the harbour, Alusaf earned Richards Bay the apartheid title “Aluminium City with Golden Future”. Transport Minister Ben Schoeman announced that he had no hesitation in choosing Richards Bay as the country’s next major harbour.³³ It is worth noting that before the construction of the harbour and Alusaf, the Mthiyane people lived in relative “harmony” with the already settled whites in the area. They were oblivious or unaware that their ancestral land had been earmarked for major projects.

29 Interview: Author with P Sokhulu, 10 May 2018.

30 Interview: Author with S Sokhulu, 17 February 2018.

31 This was a sentiment shared by most of the people I interviewed.

32 T Cubbin, *The History of Richards Bay 1897-1970s* (Empangeni: Empangeni Printers, 1997), p. 21.

33 JC Van der Walt, *The Wonder of Richards Bay*. (Richards Bay: Richards Baai Sakekamer, 1987), p. 56.

The establishment of an aluminium plant also contributed to the forced removal, as in 1965 the Industrial Development Corporation had requested Swiss Aluminium Smelter to investigate the feasibility of an aluminium smelter in South Africa. An agreement for the construction of the smelter by Aluminium Safety (Alusaf) was concluded in 1966. In June 1967 the South African Government announced that the smelter would be erected at Mandlanzini. The government targeted Mandlanzini because of its economic potential, particularly its natural resources and the availability of sufficient water, which made the site ideally suitable for the needs of an aluminium smelter and the harbour. The construction of a plant began in 1969. This project also demanded that the local people should be relocated to open up space for white settlement and to create an economic enclave dominated by whites.

This explains government interest in Mandlanzini. Subsequently, two successive Bantu Affairs Commissioners, namely Christopher Holmes and Tiny Jordan were tasked to begin the process of moving people from Mandlanzini. In the early months of 1970 Holmes began “negotiations”. At first, he clandestinely held numerous meetings with local headmen with the purpose of convincing them to persuade people to accept his proposals. He assured them that they would be moved to a “new descent and proper settlement”, called Makhathini Flats and that the government would compensate them in accordance with their loss which included revenue from their timber sales. Makhathini Flats was an irrigation settlement close to the Mozambican border.³⁴ Holmes’ proposals were completely rejected. The leaders and the people at large felt very insecure to move to an unknown destination. They were totally against transportation to this unfamiliar and wild area of about 125 miles to the north. They were happy at Mandlanzini and they were not prepared to move.

When interviewed on 20 August 2017, Sabelo Msweli, headman said, “Surely it was totally immoral for people who find themselves sitting on a gold mine to be dispossessed and the mine placed on other eager hands”.³⁵ Reporting back to his authorities Holmes, however, misrepresented the process, claiming that “Negotiations had been friendly and there was no hint of trouble”.³⁶ He further said that he had not received any complaints from Mandlanzini people. “They are a law abiding people, people who could not cause trouble.”³⁷ The plan of moving the people had not been accomplished before Holmes was replaced by Jordan as Empangeni’s Bantu Affairs Commissioner. He was empowered by the apartheid government to give orders regarding the removal of the people³⁸

34 *Daily News*, 18 January 1971.

35 Interview: Author with S Msweli, 20 August 2017.

36 *The Natal Mercury*, 20 December 1970.

37 *The Natal Mercury*, 20 December 1970.

38 Interview: Author with M Sibiyi, 10 June 2018.

from Mandlanzini. At first, he had a meeting with the chief. Jordan did not treat the chief with respect. His behaviour was considered disrespectful, and very intolerable especially, wearing a hat whilst addressing the chief to the community that held the principle of *Ubuntu* with high esteem.³⁹ Jordan was smoking and moving around while addressing the chief and this was very odd. Nevertheless in their meeting, Jordan delivered Draconian instructions from the National Party Government. According to these orders the chief was to act as a co-ordinator between his people and the government. On behalf of the apartheid government, Jordan gave two orders which people remember as follows; firstly, within a period of ten days the chief and his people were to be moved from Mandlanzini to Ntambanana. Secondly, the government would provide transport, both for the people and their property including livestock.

Besides these demands, Jordan offered a number of promises or possibilities including rewards for quick positive response. The government was prepared to refund people for their fields and homes. Jordan could not understand Zulu language properly nor reply correctly so he could not communicate accurately with the Zulu people. He was therefore assisted by his secretary Ernest Nxumalo. The delegation from the government was escorted and protected by South African Police (SAP) and South African soldiers, and even before the meeting between Jordan and the chief a number of armed policemen were seen around Mandlanzini.⁴⁰ This awakened the local people to the impending threat.

Jordan further made a number of promises about Ntambanana including free houses and food. Schools, clinics, dams, roads, community hall, local shops and supermarkets were to be built at Ntambabanana. Young children, pregnant women and adults more than 50 years would attend free clinics. A local police station with adequate policemen was to be constructed. Responding to Jordan, the chief objected to the instructions. He was not prepared to sell out or alienate his people. Headmen and people at large decided that they would rather stay where they were than move to an unknown destination despite promises of free homes and work at one of many industries supposedly to be established at Ntambanana.⁴¹ For days the fear of removal hung heavy over Mandlanzini and then almost without warning the penultimate blow fell. In five days, they were told that the government trucks would come and take them away.

The clan which had occupied the land for as long as one could remember was told that it would receive compensation for the loss of revenue from the sales of timber crops and for improvements of its plots. Ominously, there was no reference to any recompense for the value of the land. The real question was

39 *Ubuntu* is the idea that people are not only individuals but live in a community and must share things and care for each other.

40 Interview: Author with M Xulu, 17 June 2018..

41 Interview: Author with T Mthiyane, 6 August 2017.

why they were moved at all? After all, Mandlanzini lay in a predominantly black area which was intended to be part of a “Zulustan” or KwaZulu Homeland before the government decided to turn it into a home for super tankers and a huge aluminium smelter.⁴² Why should it not form part of the projected homeland and allowed revenues from what was obviously going to be a giant-spinner to stimulate Zulu economy and turned it into a viable Zulustan?

According to the apartheid government, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Chief Executive Officer of Zulu Territorial Authority, felt very strongly about the harbour. The government insisted that Buthelezi supported the construction of the harbour at Mandlanzini. The claim made was that, Buthelezi believed that Zululand was in dire need of a growth point and require a harbour for their economic survival. However, in 1973, Buthelezi had publicly complained about the increase in removals. He criticised the apartheid government by saying, “We have said before that we are not prepared to co-operate with the removal of people. We don’t want to be part to the misery of our people”.⁴³

It was understood that with the building of a harbour and industries stemming from it, there would be a big labour pool nearby and it was therefore logical to assume that the government would establish a major African township where workers would be able to acquire land.⁴⁴ Such a township would be sited to the South between the present day Richards Bay and Mthunzini town. That culminated in the establishment of Esikhaleni, previously known as Esikhawini township. There was a possibility of some men and women of the Mandlanzini clan to remain in the area to become absorbed as workers in the development projects at the harbour and at the country’s largest aluminium smelter nearby. But these eventually became dwellers living like millions of other black South Africans in dormitory locations.

5. RESISTANCE, REMOVAL, LIFE IN NTAMBANANA AND RETURN TO MANDLANZINI

The story of the forced removal at Mandlanzini was not unique, as forced removals in South Africa were carried out across the country by the apartheid government, especially from the 1950s to 1980s, The policy of forced removal led to some black people flee and settle in the neighbouring countries. Those who remained in the country were forced to resist the policy either through violent protest, peaceful resistance, or other means of accommodation and resilience.

42 *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 December 1970.

43 E Unterhalter, *Forced Removals: The Division, Segregation and Control of the people of South Africa* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa, 1987), p. 42.

44 *Durban Bureau*, 17 December 1970.

The policy led black people to develop strategies of survival in the country of their birth since they were exposed to poverty, exploitation and alienation from their cultural heritage. They organised themselves into groups and formed *stokvels* or community-based saving clubs aimed at eradicating poverty where money was rotating, on monthly bases, among members.⁴⁵

The removal from Mandlanzini was directly related to the commissioning of the harbour. In 1973 construction of the Richards Bay harbour started, in the vicinity of Mandlanzini. Two years later, the 1975 consolidation plans showed Mandlanzini as one of the areas of KwaZulu to be placed under the authority of the central government. According to the apartheid government, Mandlanzini was too valuable to remain in black ownership. By then, the rush was on to complete the harbour in time for its official opening on 1 April 1976, when the first consignment of coal was due to be delivered to Japan. The removal of Mandlanzini people therefore, was carried through with great speed. People were very bitter about this removal. The chief declared in a meeting with his councillors that the Mthiyane people originated at Mandlanzini during the reign of King Shaka when there were no white people in the area.⁴⁶

People protested against the removal. They told Jordan to ask Pretoria to reconsider its decision and allowed them to live on their land on which they were planted by God. Representatives also went to Ulundi, KwaZulu capital, to seek help, only to find that the KwaZulu government officials knew nothing about their impending removal. People got an inevitable reply from Pretoria, the central government could not meet their request since Mandlanzini was a “badly situated area” and hence it had to be moved.⁴⁷ After another short silence, Jordan reappeared, this time to bring the community a copy of Government Gazette and spelt out its implications: that the Mandlanzini people no longer fell under KwaZulu but came direct under Pretoria. In this meeting the people made it clear, once more, that they did not want to move. Jordan evaded their anger by claiming ignorance, yet earlier on he had presented three orders to the chief on behalf of the central government. People remained angry, confused and apprehensive. In August 1975 headmen and some representatives went to Johannesburg to speak at the Annual Conference of the Institute of Race Relations and to state publicly their unequivocal opposition to removal.⁴⁸ It was unfortunate that nothing effective came from that conference. The Mandlanzini community tried to resist but knowing very well that the police and soldier were carrying lethal weapons, they decided not use arms.

45 D Posel, “Stokvels as a Community-Based Saving Club Aimed at Eradicating Poverty: A Case Study of South African Rural Women”, *An International Journal of Community Diversity* 17 (2), 2017, p. 15.

46 “Anon.” AFRA. Report No. 13, September 1981.

47 *Zululand Observer*, 13 June 1975.

48 Interview: Author with R Mthimkhulu, 16 September 2018.

As indicated above, removal policies followed a general pattern, first, communities received notification about the impending eviction. In many cases schools were closed, water supply cut off and bus services withdrawn. To coax people into moving “voluntarily” promises were made about compensation and the availability of land, jobs and schools in the resettlement areas. Yet many communities refused to vacate the land of their ancestors. In these cases, the government threatened people with imprisonment and sent bulldozers and a fleet of trucks to destroy houses and transport people to resettlement sites. The infamous pass laws prevented escaping to cities and thus people found themselves with no option but to move into already over crowded reserves.⁴⁹

On Wednesday 6 January 1976, the axe fell at dawn in Mandlanzini, when the Bantu Administration Board men supported by the South African Police, ordered residents to get out of their homes, while a demolition team went to work in the systematic destruction of their houses that had stood and sheltered them for years. Chaos broke out as the squatters ran for their possession, carrying them towards the road. In response to this harsh treatment, some women took off their clothes to display their private parts. The front-end loader lurched mercilessly into action, lifting a shanty into the air and dropping it in a pile crumpled corrugated iron and wooden beam. Again and again, it went onto demolish ten more before becoming stuck in the mud. A tractor sent to pull it out also got stuck. The sullen and traumatised crowd watched and jeered. This showed that they were not taking the removal passively. Others attributed the incident to African magic. This was a clear indication that they considered it immoral to dehumanise innocent people in their ancestral land. The state vehicles, “GGs” “Government Garages”, so named because of their registration “GG”, came very early in the morning while people were asleep. Within minutes pandemonium spread throughout the small community of Mthiyane, jolted from its sleep, as dreadful and apprehensive cries came from house to house. Some of the residents scrambled for their livestock while others tried to rescue their furniture. Some houses were demolished before the contents could be removed. One person reported, “When we were removed from Mandlanzini at gunpoint, we ran away leaving most of our belongings behind, we want Mandlanzini back now!”⁵⁰

For Themba Mthiyane, Wednesday 6 January was the worst experience. Years later he still shook his head at the horrific memory of it. He did not understand how could a man be forced to leave his house, his friends and his work?⁵¹ The only answer he could think of was extra-ordinary one that he was not treated like a real human being. Yet the old man was just one of an estimated

49 Wilson and Ramphela, *Uprooting Poverty in South Africa*, p. 36.

50 “Anon”. Minutes of Mandlanzini land claim meeting, 1996.

51 Interview: Author with T Mthiyane, 6 August 2017.

3.5 million people who were forced to move in one of the most ruthless and widespread social engineering in the modern history of South Africa.

Few managed to transport their cattle and other livestock and this had a negative impact on lives and livelihoods of young men. Because they lost many of their cattle, it became difficult for young men lacking bride price to marry unless they found employment to help them purchase the required eleven cows. In an interview held on 20 August 2017, Msweli compared GG's to the cattle trucks of the Nazi Germany. Such a powerful image, in a sense, showed economic and social death. One resident, Thembi Sokhulu, then a teacher at the local school, remembers the day on which they came for her:

On Wednesday 6 January at half past five in the morning, there were five white men rattling the gate and shouting in Afrikaans *Maak julle oop!* (Open up!). My husband preparing to go work, watched in horror as two trucks pulled up the house. Before we had even opened the front door, I just heard the hammer on the pillar of the veranda, a big sound that made me wonder if I was dying. That sound went straight into my heart and I shall never forget it. The police told Solomon (my husband), whether he liked it or not, he was going. We had to take everything and throw it outside. Imagine us taking our washing just as it was, a chair just as it was, that is how they removed us. I felt such pity for my husband because he had built that house with his own bare hands. The house was our home and our little kingdom. We had freedom there, and on that day I felt we were losing our right and human dignity, our friends in the community and the old spirit of people I lived with and valued.⁵²

Finally, after the dust and shouting had subsided, the convoy was ready. Some men rode on the back of the trucks hanging onto their few belongings they had been able to salvage. Buses were provided for women and children. The distance was 61 kilometres but it felt like a long and pitiless journey during which people wept unashamedly, before they reached Ntambanana. The trucks and buses were unloaded and each family was given a tiny three-roomed wooden home with a mud floor and asbestos roof. Many of these structures were so draughty that the new inhabitants had to fill up the cracks with mud. They moved their broken furniture into their new houses, wondering what they had done to deserve such a humiliating treatment in the country of their forefathers. Like many others, Thembi and her baby were dumped at her unwanted new address. She felt as a stranger in this structure which was very cold, with no middle doors.

52 Interview: Author with S Sokhulu, 17 February 2018.

The *Zululand Observer* reporter took a walk through Mandlanzini after the bulldozers had moved in and later wrote, "It looked like a bombed city, few citizens who remain are hounded out of their houses for not possessing permits... Hundreds sleep on veranda, living with friends in the ruin and the rains are coming".⁵³ People remained separated for months. Some, who were not at their homesteads when trucks came in, were left behind, forcing them to wander by foot in search of their families. Others did not go to Ntambanana but preferred to beg land from neighbouring chiefs. Most of them lived as refugees longing for the day of their return to Mandlanzini.

Some people totally refused to go to Ntambanana. Consequently, new squatter communities sprang up at places like KwaBhuquza near present day Alusaf.⁵⁴ In 1976 the new law against squatters was amended to allow the Bantu Administration Board officials to post an eviction order seven days before the demolition of the dwelling. In addition, a landowner could not allow squatters on his land without official approval. Later on, all restraint was removed with the passing of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act in 1976, which made it possible to flatten a dwelling without any prior notice, unless the occupier could prove that he or she had little title on he or she stood.⁵⁵ The people who squatted around Mandlanzini were regarded as illegal families in the land of their forefathers.

At the beginning of the removal the Mthiyane people living in the South-Eastern side of Mzingazi Lake were not affected. With the South- Western side demolished, the bulldozers then turned their attention to the South- Eastern side and to the North. In the North, the government wanted to open up space for timber plantations.⁵⁶ Over the next few months, thousands of the Mthiyane people who had once lived at Mandlanzini gradually dispersed. Some people believe that the "divide and rule" principle was applied in Mandlanzini. One of them, Mpangazitha Sibiya testified that there was a rumour that some local people actually receive money and some favours from Jordan, so that they would betray their fellow compatriots. In support of this view, Sibiya pointed out that, two very strong leaders of the community (Mveli and Zakhele) who insisted that they were even prepared to die for Mandlanzini, were arrested before bulldozers came in. They were regarded as "troublemakers". It became unclear as to how they were identified.⁵⁷ Madoda Xulu was of the opinion that, Ernest Nxumalo together with some local elements posted stickers next to houses occupied by the so called "troublesome" that enabled the police and soldiers to deal with them ruthlessly.⁵⁸

53 *Zululand Observer*, 12 January 1976.

54 Interview: Author with S Msweli, 20 August 2017.

55 Cubbin, *The History of Richards Bay 1897-1970S*, p. 22.

56 JB Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation in KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa* (Netherlands: Oxfam, 2006), p. 48.

57 Interview: Author with M Sibiya, 10 June 2018.

58 Interview: Author with M Xulu, 17 June 2018:

People thus, described the betrayal in quite biblical terms, drawing for example on the story of Moses. This way of remembering offers major insight into how memory connects to oral history; that people sometimes take significant narratives and use them to frame their memory.⁵⁹ Some people pointed fingers to the chief and blamed him for cooperating with the government. According to these people, the chief benefited from the removal. They claimed that he received a modern house with new furniture at Ntambanana. His family and livestock were transported to the new settlement before the day of the removal.

Before the forced removal, a government delegation from Pietermaritzburg, the provincial capital, under the leadership of Gert Hanekom and Carol Walker visited Mandlanzini for the purposes of negotiating the removal. The negotiations failed after a long talk. The discussion included, *inter alia*, the issue of graves of their ancestors and all those who had passed on. The chief insisted that, it was virtually impossible for the people to leave their forefather's remains and graves and move to a new site. Hanekom responded by stating that graves would be exhumed so that the remains would be reburied somewhere else. He promised a goat and a cow for each identifiable grave as compensation. This arrangement, according to the chief, could not be accepted because it was totally against principle of *Ubuntu* and the Zulu culture in general. People differed in terms of viewing the chief's stance. While others viewed him as a collaborator, others felt that he was on the side of the Mthiyane people.

The issue of graves became one of the most devastating aspects of the people's removal from Mandlanzini as was with other apartheid era forced removals.⁶⁰ The abrupt removal of the people left them with no time to conduct proper rituals for their ancestors' spirits. One such ritual required that the family sent a delegation to fetch the spirit of their dead relative with a thorny branch from an acacia tree. The thorny branches would absorb the spirit which would be return to their home. A designated person would carry the branch and talk to the spirit along the way, providing direction to the new homestead. When they arrive there, they would place the branch in the cattle enclosure. Cattle would then eat the branch, absorbing the soul. Each homestead has a hut or ancestors house where they would find sustenance like Zulu beer and food.⁶¹

At resettlement areas in general, the reality differed from what the people were promised. Living conditions and the provision of public services in resettlement areas were dismal.⁶² This happened in resettlement areas like

59 H Paula and L Shopes, "*Building Partnership Between Oral History and Memory Studies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), pp. vii, xvii.

60 Interview: Author with S Msweli, 20 August 2017. For more discussion on graves and belonging, see , J Fontein, "Graves, Ruin, and Belonging: Towards an Anthropology of Proximity", *Journal of Royal Anthropology Proximity*, 17 (4) p. 706.

61 Interview: Author with M Xulu, 17 June 2018.

62 Desmond, *The Discarded People*, p. 22.

Ntambanana, Dukuduku and in Sabokwe. Due to the shortage of job opportunities and the fact that social grants were often not paid out in homelands, the survival of many families depended on subsistence farming. However, tenure in most homeland areas was communal and local chiefs decided who could cultivate it.⁶³ Resettled people had little chance to obtain arable land, partly because land was scarce and relatively infertile and also because resettled people were perceived by the local people to have stolen their children's land. The situation was exacerbated by that, people in resettlement areas were not allowed to own livestock except fowl.⁶⁴ Due to lack of economic opportunities, many men and women had to migrate for many months each year to work in the mines or work in the cities as domestic workers. In resettlement areas people were not allowed to own land or to use it at will.

There is a vast difference between Mandlanzini and Ntambanana. One basic example is that, Mandlanzini was adjacent to the coast and Ntambanana is in the interior. Whereas in Mandlanzini there is the great Mzingazi Lake supporting the entire community with clean fresh water, in the arid Ntambanana there is no water. Since Mandlanzini is located along the coast, heavy rainfall was very common. In comparison, there is very little or no rainfall at Ntambanana. In contrast with huge grazing fields at Mandlanzini, the hilly Ntambanana had no worthwhile grazing land. Mandlanzini has high economic potential and capabilities because of its fertile soil, abundant trees, long grass and rich crops which easily support a large population. This is in contrast to the desolate landscape of Ntambanana. Based on these differences, it became clear that the removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini to Ntambanana was an example of blatant apartheid exploitation of people. The government did not even deliver its promises at Ntambanana.

It is important to mention that resettlement at Ntambanana had elements of both cooperation and conflict. Resettlement led to the formation of new networks but simultaneously stirred violence. Prevalence of economic hardship and crime appeared to have facilitated the formation of new relationships. Qualitative research conducted at Ntambanana shows that people often depended on informal networks of borrowing and support in the community.⁶⁵ Conflict, however, manifested itself much stronger than cooperation. Local people of the area began to attack the newcomers for taking over their land leading to endemic violence.⁶⁶ Crime, in particular cattle theft, was rife. This cattle theft got out of hand when the local police deemed it too dangerous

63 J Sharp and A Spiegel, *A Vulnerability to Impoverishment to South African Rural Areas: The Erosion Neighbourhood as a Social Resource* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 13

64 Desmond, *The Discarded People*, p. 24.

65 Interview: Author with M Xulu, 17 June 2018.

66 Interview: Author with S Sokhulu, 17 February 2018.

to control these areas that were ruled by gangs living off stock theft. The national government had little incentive to interfere.

The settlement of the Mthiyane people at Ntambanana was a nightmare for them because the local people of the area refused to accept them. A conflict-ridden relationship developed between the new settlers and the original community which was falsely presented as part of political violence affecting the province. It was not too long before tension broke out between Biyela (chief of Ntambanana) and Mthiyane (chief of Mandlanzini). This conflict was centred on the territorial dispute. According to Biyela the new arrivals occupied the area illegally. Biyela insisted that, the area rightfully belonged to his ancestors and not to Mbonambi or Mthiyane people. In the mid-1980s, tension between the two leaders soon engulfed the people and led to violent clashes. In the case of Ntambanana, numerous meetings were held for the purpose of making peace between the Biyela and Mthiyane people. By holding talks with Biyela, Mthiyane hoped that the local people would become less antagonistic towards his people.

During the early 1990s the party political conflict between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) disrupted peace processes at Ntambanana. A number of people in the area, including those who were innocent like children, women and the elderly, were killed and houses were burnt. Violence started in 1984 and continued until 1996. The prestige and power of Mthiyane declined and an unknown group of people attempted to kill him. Nothing effective was done by the apartheid government. There was great disillusionment amongst the Mthiyane people at Ntambanana.⁶⁷ Some of them accused the government of treating them worse than they would treat animals. One of them Robert Mthimkhulu asked, "how could a man be forced to live in a windowless house?"⁶⁸ The stay at Ntambanana was mostly characterised by cynicism and pessimism.

A concerned group which became known as the Mandlanzini Crisis Committee under the leadership of Selby Mthiyane was formed in 1990. The majority of its members were young and educated. Selby told his supporters that, time had arrived to voice their grievances. He promised to emancipate the Mthiyane people from the terrible plight brought on them by the apartheid government. These young people, however, were not working hand in hand with chief Mthiyane. Some of them regarded Mthiyane as a sell-out and a collaborator. According to Selby, it was fruitless to involve him because he was too old and inactive. The Mandlanzini Crisis Committee was soon regarded as an affiliate of the ANC. It is also alleged that the ANC supported it financially. Moreover, some of its members were regarded as activists of the South African Communist

67 Interview: Author with T Mthiyane, 6 August 2017.

68 Interview: Author with R Mthimkhulu, 16 September 2018.

Party (SACP). Consequently, some members of the Mthiyane community did not associate themselves with the committee. Those members were then declared to be Inkatha's affiliates. This divided the Mthiyane people.

As a result of these divergent political allegiances (ANC and IFP) yet another committee was formed. As compared to the first one, this one was poorly organised and not really strong. Most of its members were not educated, unpopular and not well known in political circles. Nevertheless, they worked enthusiastically and at the end formed part of the group which returned to Mandlanzini. Despite these two antagonistic committees, there were also neutral people, mostly evangelical Christians, who did not associate themselves with neither of the two committees. These people decided to remain at Ntambanana. They followed Mthiyane and disapproved violent and radical actions.

Selby and his group then presented their case to the government. After lengthy discussions, the Mandlanzini Crisis Committee gained victory. It was thought that it was because of the ANC that these people returned (from Ntamanana) to Richards Bay in July 1992.⁶⁹ Presently, they stay at the area between Richards Bay airport and Mzingazi.

Also in 1992 violence was escalating in Ntambanana and territorial dispute between Biyela and Mthiyane was also mounting. According to Sipho Mbuyazi (headman), it was this violence that forced them to accept the offer of the pathetically small and infertile land at Sabokwe between the sea and Richards Bay Minerals (RBM). In his explanation:

It was the chief of KwaBiyela that came in and caused chaos. We tried to resist but we failed. He ended up saying, Mbuyazi, are you still in my place with your people? You people, are you still staying in my place? Dig your trees, carry on your shoulders and get the hell out of here. Even if it's a peach tree, take it with you. Go to KwaMbonambi. Those were the words of the chief of KwaBiyela. We sat back thinking things would cool down until one day we were just encountered by a brawl. People's children were finished in one day. We escaped just by luck.⁷⁰

By 1995 a large component of this community fled from the area. The Sabokwe people then instituted a claim for their lost land north of Richards Bay. In 1996 the Department of Land Affairs investigated various locations leading to the resettlement claim, bringing them back to their original land that had been appropriated in order to establish government plantations under apartheid.⁷¹ Upon establishing the community, the Land Affairs Department funded a planning exercise that identified certain basic minimum conditions and resources that should be made available for the community. As people recalled,

69 Interview: Author with S Sokhulu, 17 February 2018.

70 Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation*, pp. 48-49.

71 Localised violence with historical roots in the historical removal feeds into broader Inkata Freedom Party/ ANC violence.

these included; access to an affordable and comfortable home, basic engineering services and social infrastructure such as schools, a clinic, community facilities and recreational areas as the foundation of a peaceful and harmonious co-existence and community development.⁷²

However, many years after resettlement at Sabokwe, the community is still suffering because very few of these promises have been delivered. In terms of infrastructure development, the ANC government built clinics, schools and constructed roads but basic needs like houses and water supply are still lacking. The biggest complication in this community is an uneasy existence between the community and the “sea” of timber plantations surrounding them. Besides the plantations delimiting the community’s access to land for crops and grazing, there is also no direct benefit in terms of jobs and other social and economic benefits. For the Mthiyane people, it seems plantations have come to represent only the bad picture. Socially, they provide a haven for thugs, and a theatre of rape and violence; economically, and there is a denial of land and jobs; culturally, there is a threat to community integrity and sustainability, and politically, a limit to community regeneration and reproduction.⁷³ People wanted these plantations to be removed completely to open up space for them. However, the Sabokwe area is much better than Ntambanana in terms of livelihood.

From being evicted to make place for plantations, the Sabokwe community was brought back to reside among plantations, with Richards Bay Mineral dune to the East and all other sides bordered by plantations. A strong resentment towards the plantations was expressed by many people in the community. One of the villagers testified against the plantations with much emotions during the plantation case under local headman, charging:

The plantations belong to the government. They are not ours. They squash us, we can't even breathe under these conditions. We feel trapped being located so close to such huge plantations. It makes us unsafe. Our cattle are not free in this place. Even if you want to collect firewood you need to first go and get a letter authorising you to collect firewood before you can collect the firewood. Living in this area is uncomfortable. People are very unhappy. They feel like prisoners. For every move you make you have to first acquire a letter of authorisation. These plantations are real prisons because even if you want to go to the toilet you get arrested if you are caught without a letter giving you permission to pee there. Am I telling lies? Truly speaking, there is nothing connecting us with the plantations.⁷⁴

72 Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation*, p. 49.

73 Interview: Author with S Sokhulu, 17 February 2018.

74 Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation*, pp. 50–51.

The villagers felt a huge sense of insecurity and helplessness against the plantations. The fact that even their walking across the plantations was controlled reflected the criminalisation of their movement. The headman spoke against the excesses of the industry in controlling and limiting their activities:

Now even if a cow gets caught up on the fence I can't release it because I'm not even carrying a knife to cut the fence and save the animal's life. Even if I were to come across a wild cat in the plantations I would not be able to protect myself because I can't even carry a stick. I have to leave my stick at home. We are just burdened people. We are impoverished. Actually, the people I feel very sorry for are the women and girls. They have even more severe problems in the plantations. Sometimes people just appear in the middle of nowhere and start chasing the women and girls away from the plantations. You end up not knowing who these people actually are. Are they the police or just criminals? You find women running away madly all the time.⁷⁵

The Sabokwe community is adamant that, the only way forward is to roll back the plantations so that they have breathing space, land to grow crops and to care for their livestock and with that they are confident that the water situation would improve again.

One clear problem in the land resettlement agreement reached in 1996 is that, there was inadequate compensation and bad faith on the part of the government to give such a big number of people a very small area to live on. Also there were few opportunities to make a living, or never enough land to grow their own food. One of the participants in a group discussion held at Sabokwe Hall on 12 February 2006 said, "I have a complaint. I have been in this area for about ten years now. We have no crops in this place. We were just dumped here. I have no idea what those who are unemployed eat. I don't have a clue how they survive. I don't know how they sleep, having not eaten".⁷⁶

6. CONCLUSION

This is the story of the forced removal of the people from Mandlanzini in the present day KwaZulu-Natal between January and May 1976, during the height of apartheid under the National Party regime in South Africa. The removal of the people from Mandlanzini, in many ways, reflected the removal of "black spots" within white-designated areas throughout rural South Africa. Through oral

75 Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation*, p. 51; K Wood and R Jewkes, "Violence, Rape and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township", *Gender and Development* 5 (2), 1997, p. 41.

76 Karumbidza, *A Study of the Social and Economic Impact of Industrial Tree Plantation*, p. 50.

interviews, their story unfolded in their own words. From trauma, many now wonder whom they are, having lost their connection to their ancestral land for such a long time. The National Party Government, however, justified itself by saying that the forced removals of the Mthiyane people would benefit the entire nation because development would include the construction of industries, which would create job opportunities for all elements of South African society. Of course, today the land that once represented homes, livelihoods and security for many now has many booming industries and neat suburbs of modern houses occupied by individuals who historically have few ties to the area. The area they lived in is now, Birdswood, Wildenweide, Brackenham, Aquadene, Meer-en-see, Arboretum and Veldenvlei ust to mention a few. It is also true that Richards Bay is today one of the fast developing industrial cities in South Africa, however, historical judgements should not be made based on the present but from the past.

The removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini is a sad story. Like many other affected communities elsewhere, for example at Bhenghazi, Sabokwe, and Dukuduku, the Mthiyane people were not just submissive but they fought in vain, to remain free in the land that was undoubtedly theirs. In spite of the prevalence of forced removals, very little is written on the experiences of victims and urgency or resilience they demonstrated. Black people were forced to respond to the policy either through violent protest or peaceful resistance. Representatives and deputations negotiated with both Pretoria and KwaZulu government, but to no avail. The story of Mandlanzini raises cautions about oral history. It appears from the evidence from oral history that, memory does not remain fixed, over time testimonies are bound to change. As this essay show, narratives of oral history is also influenced by context rather than events. For instance, all interviewees claim that everyone was happy at Mandlanzini before forced removals. This is an indication that people “remember” some past in highly idealised ways. In short their memories are shaped by the informant’s position and history at the moment when they give the testimony.