The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

WALLACE AMOS MGOQI

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INTERVIEW

Q: Well, it's so great to meet you, Wallace Mgoqi. My name is Dan Whitman, and for the transcriber we should say that it is February 16, 2010. We're here in Cape Town, and Mr. Mgoqi, of the many things that he's done in his life, one thing of interest is his

participation, in 1979, in a group visit with Operation Crossroads in Africa. But before we get to that, I'd like to get a summary from you. If you could give us, in this complex society, your own origins. Where did you fit into this society as a child, as a pupil, as a student, and as a young professional? Those are many questions, but let's just wander at will through that.

MGOQI: Well, I was born on the 7th of June 1949 in a suburb, known here in Cape Town as Goodwood, a suburb of Cape Town, it is part of the northern suburbs in Cape Town. And when I was around age six, of course, with the enforcement of the Group Areas Act—the group areas came into being in 1950, just a year after I was born—around 1955, 1956, it was being enforced, so our family was then forcibly removed from Goodwood and landed in one of the first African townships, one of the first of that kind of townships, known as Nyanga (Nyanga is a Xhosa word meaning "the moon"). Nyanga was the second of the three oldest townships, the first being Langa, and Nyanga being the second. (Langa is also a Xhosa word meaning "the sun") However, in this context, it was a shortened form of Langalibalele, a Zulu King of Amahlubi tribe, who was captured by the British as they invaded what we call today, KwaZulu-Natal. He was transferred to Cape Town, where he was kept at first in a concentration camp, near where African people lived, and were later forcibly removed to the present Langa township. The ANC activists of the time named their new place after this Zulu king, admiring his militant spirit of resisting the colonists against the annexation of his land.

I started my primary schooling there, and just after two years, in 1959, in fact, my grandfather apparently fell ill in the Eastern Cape, and my father asked my mother to go and look after him. I accompanied my mother, to the Eastern Cape, in a town called Fort Beaufort. I had the privilege to meet my grandfather, whom I would not have known had I not accompanied my mother. In 1961 he passed on. By that time, my father decided he would also settle in the Eastern Cape. So my mother went to put up a hut that the family was going to settle in. So I then continued to do my schooling there, doing standards three, four and five, in the area known as Ezeleni, just outside King William's Town.

Q: Let me interrupt this. I will, a number of times. Why was it a privilege to know your grandfather?

MGOQI: You know, in retrospect, it was, in a sense because I think I would have had some kind of identity crisis if my knowledge of my family and my family tree just went only as far as my father. It really stabilized me, to know my father's father, and I also know my father's mother, because both of them were still alive and I lived at least about three years with them. Among the Xhosas, one of the largest Nguni tribes, from which leaders like Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela comes– it has always been a matter of pride to be able to call out the names of people who are in your lineage, as far back as possible, an oral tradition that is now dying away in modern times.
The well-known, John Maxwell, the leadership guru in America, says: "None of us ever grow beyond four fundamental human needs:

-A sense of worth, if missing, we feel inferior.

-A sense of belonging, if missing, we feel insecure.
-A sense of purpose, if missing, we feel illegitimate.
-A sense of competence, if missing, we feel inadequate."

So knowing where we come from, helps to solidify all of these positive aspects in our identity. Knowing, for example, the history of the Xhosas, that they fought no less than ten resistance wars, against the invading British and Boer forces, who wanted to take away their land, when I am feeling down, coming from this stock of people, I reinforce myself by reminding myself that I come from a long line of Xhosa warriors, who fought many and bitter wars of resistance.
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Q: What sort of people were there?

MGOQI: My grandfather was a very traditional sort of man who lived on a farm which apparently, I learn now, was expropriated and it became public land. And then the government of the day leased it to white families, because I kept seeing this white man who would come onto the farm, and my grandfather had such respect for him. I remember he would take his hat off when this young white man came around—and it really was just, one of the things that baffled me. My grandfather was already gray, but he showed so much respect to this young white man.

Q: Usurping his place. Taking his place. I don't know if there was a piece of paper, but in a sense, the land belonged to him.

MGOQI: The land belonged to him and the families that had been there. Hence, as you will hear later on, when I was involved in land restitution, my claim was not about our removal from Goodwood but was about that land that my grandfather had settled on. This was precisely because I knew from those early days, that this land was very valuable, compared to Goodwood, where we were living in the backyard of someone else's house.

Q: So this is a very important part of what motivated some of your activities later in life.

MGOQI: Yes, later in life. So, for me to know my father gives me a sense of rootedness in life. I continued, then, to do my schooling, standards three, four, five, in another rural area, Ezeleni, and later on, in 1964, I had to come and do a sixth year back in Cape Town, at Hlengisa Higher Primary School, in Nyanga township, because my mother also had come back. I completed my primary schooling not without problems. I think that's because of the barrenness of the environment, no playgrounds around the area where I was growing up—we've now moved from Nyanga to Guguletu. It is, indeed, true that we are products of both nature and nurture, i.e., our genes as well as our environment. I know of many people, whose genes could have taken them far, but the oppressive environment in which they lived stunted their growth and development. As they say, many a flower dies, before it sees its bloom, it is a great tragedy of life.
I attribute a great deal of what I have become to the fortunate exposure; I have had from early on in my career, especially in America.

Q: That was the third township.

MGOQI: Yes, the third township. Guguletu is the third township. It is a Xhosa word meaning *"Our Pride"*. Up until today, I still do not know what I would point at as a source of pride about the place. Our oppressors were masters at giving areas we lived in, nice-sounding names.

Q: These townships came into existence because of people being chased away from where they were living.

MGOQI: From different areas, yes.

Q: So these were informal settlements.

MGOQI: Yes, well, they became formal townships, yes.

Q: They started out…

MGOQI: Informal, they were ad hoc, yes.

Q: Now, you talk about the barrenness of the environment in 1964. Was this not when the government began abolishing District Six?

MGOQI: That was around the time. For example, when we moved back in 1963, I had completed standard five, standard six. It was 1964, and 1965. Already in 1964 I was playing truant and did not want to go to school. I had friends influencing me; going to take up some part-time jobs, working in a quarry…peer pressure was hard at work. In the area where I grew up in Guguletu, there were kids my age that had fallen out of the school system. Some were taking pride in being able to work and earn some money. It was quite tempting to follow their example, and act against the advice of your own parents.

Q: In a quarry?

MGOQI: My father discovered that I had not been going to school for two weeks and gave me a beating for it, and I had go back to school. I completed standard six, then again, I think because of the environment, which was not motivating, I spent the whole of 1965 trying to work. And my father kept saying, "Go back to school!" Again, under the influence of friends, I was doing some menial jobs in some Indian shops in Rylands Athlone. I even came here, to work in the city, in Cape Town, in a place called the White House Hotel. It was in Long Street at the time. By the end of the year, I worked in Sea Point as a scullery boy, washing dishes and all of that.

Q: Something drew you towards work and away from studying, at the same time. The study, you say, was not motivating?

MGOQI: The study was not motivating.

Q: At that time, did you link education with more professional options later in the future? Or was it a more immediate consideration that school was boring?

MGOQI: It was boring and there was a lot of corporal punishment at school in those days. A lot of it, and a lot of humiliation, even. I remember there was this one teacher who would make us take off our pants, and in front of the classroom, on the table, he would give you ten, fifteen lashes, in front of the girls. You would have to pull up your pants after that, and it was just a humiliating experience, yes. So there was that primitiveness, as well, in the schools. It certainly did not make schooling a pleasurable experience.

Q: Did other people also try to get away from that school?

MGOQI: Yes, yes. Judging by the number of kids of school-going age, who were not at school, a fair amount of other people did try to get away from that school.

Q: Not a good place.

MGOQI: Dropping out of school then was something that was quite prevalent, yes. By the end of 1965—I remember this one time, this white lady had asked me to clean the floor, "scrub the floor," which I did, and she came back and sort of knelt and said, "Well, you know, I don't think you've done a thorough job of this. You must do it again." I said to myself, "Whew! Am I going to do this for a lifetime?" And on that day, I decided, "I don't care what is happening at school, I am going back. I cannot live a life like this, being ordered around, washing dishes."

Q: So you remember the moment and the day.

MGOQI: I remember the moment and the day.

Q: And you were, what? Sixteen or seventeen?

MGOQI: It was '64—in '65 I was sixteen.

Q: Sixteen years old.

MGOQI: In '65 I was sixteen.

Q: And you understood that going to school was the way of escaping from menial jobs.

MGOQI: Exactly, I did. From that day, I even told my friends, and my friends wouldn't believe me, I said, "Guys, I am going back to school next year." And they said, "You?" And I said, "Yes, I am going back to school." And in that year, they had just started a

high school in Guguletu, which is now known as Fezeka, meaning "Be perfect or Perfect yourself".

Q: That's the school.

MGOQI: It's a Xhosa word, yes, meaning "Perfect yourself."

Q: Who ran that school?

MGOQI: The late Makhonza "White Prince" Ngambu, a man who was a disciplinarian, through and through, a perfectionist and a disciplinarian, who held the school together. Fezeka in those early years was the Winner of what was known as a Phinda-khethe (Choose again) Floating Trophy by schools with the best results. Fezeka had won the trophy three years in succession. I recall that in later years, when I was serving on the Council of the University of Cape Town, when the opportunity presented itself to nominate someone who excelled educationally, I nominated my former Principal and he was awarded a Master of Arts (Honorary) degree in Education, and he was eternally grateful to me for having nominated him. The more I distanced myself from the compliment, saying that it was the testimony of his life, and what he accomplished which recommended him, the more he complimented me. He is now late, gone to be with his fathers, as it were. I am eternally grateful to him, not so much about his formal lessons in class. He was a great language teacher, in English and Xhosa, but more for the informal teaching about life and its challenges. He had moments, when he would ask us to close our books and just sit and listen. He would tell stories of success in life, either from literature or real life experiences. Not realizing at the time, how these were impacting on me, now I realize. In retrospect, I am the greatest beneficiary of those lessons on life, as they gradually impacted me in a way I have never been able to comprehend. He instilled in me an interest in education, which made me thirsty for knowledge. No wonder my friends found it easy to persuade me to go with them, when they decided to go to a boarding school, the following year.

Q: Was it the state? Was it a private thing? Was it a locally-constructed, that is the school?

MGOQI: No, it was a public school.

Q: A public school, but with people from the community?

MGOQI: With people from the community, yes.

Q: Who perhaps understood the students more than they would if they came from away.

MGOQI: Yes. As a matter of fact, they started in sort of a shanty building in the first year. In the second year, they used a primary school. That was when I started. They had moved to a primary school in the area of Guguletu. And that's where I started. And then, in the third year—their third year, my second year—they had acquired a building that

was previously called St. Joseph's Home. It was an orphanage that was run by the Roman Catholic Church, but they had left that building because they had acquired a new building from elsewhere. In fact, in Montana, on the other side of Guguletu, in what was at the time regarded as a Coloured area. So Fezeka Senior Secondary School, took occupation of that building, and it was really there that I began to find myself, even though there was corporal punishment and all of that. I was beginning to have a relationship with the teachers, pre- eminently, my Latin teacher, who was not much older than me, and our Principal. I was beginning to open myself up to be influenced positively, both by my schooling peers and by my teachers.

Q: How many years of schooling did you lose? A couple years?

MGOQI: No, no. I just missed 1965.

Q: Did you have to repeat that?

MGOQI: No, I had done standard six, so when I came back I was in Form One. At the time they had Form One, Form Two, Form Three, or Junior Certificate (J.C) Form Four, Form Five or Senior Certificate (S.C). That was Matric (ulation), which prepared one for the university.

Q: So were you able to continue, sort of skipping that year that you had lost?

MGOQI: That year was just gone. I just started Form One, and then Form Two, and then Form Three. At the time it was called Junior Secondary School and you would get a Junior Certificate(J.C) for that, as you got a Senior Certificate(S.C) for standard ten.

Q: So it's like a high school equivalent sort of thing? In the U.S. it is comparable to?

MGOQI: Junior Certificate was Semi-high school. It was halfway through high school. And then we had to do another two years to complete high school. And then, already then, in my subjects, for example, I realized that I had an aptitude for Latin, and I remember in my final exam, in J.C, my teacher and I had a bet that if I won a distinction he would give me R1. R1 was such a lot of money then, it could be about a hundred rand today. And I did get a distinction, so he paid me my one rand. I got a renewed sense of self and an enhanced sense of who I was. What also helped me to find some value in myself was that towards the end of Junior Secondary School our Latin teacher organized a Rag as a fund-raising event. There were various categories of people. I was made to be a gentleman, wear some decent clothes and walk like a gentleman. This gave a new sense of who I could be.

Q: I can't think of a more remote, exotic subject matter than Latin. What was it about Latin that appealed to you?

MGOQI: I really don't know. Because I think I have a mind that is attentive. When I get words into my mind, I am able to take it back with ease. Latin is really about analyzing.

It's very analytical, in terms of the conjugations, and the various forms of conjugations, the declensions and all of that. So it's all about that. And of course, you will hear later about that.

So after the Junior /Senior certificate, I had met my friends, who were going to go to a boarding school in the Eastern Cape. And my parents, even though I knew that they were poor—my father was a laborer at Maitland, Abattoirs(where they slaughter animals)—I also wanted to go with my friends, you know? And then my parents allowed me. They said, "OK. You may go." I went to this high school, which was a boarding school, Healdtown High School.

Q: Now, boarding school costs money. How did you pay for that?

MGOQI: My parents paid. They did support me. Up to this day, I do not know how they did it from their meager income, miraculously they did and am eternally grateful to both of them for it. Certainly, the grace of God covered them all those years.

Q: Eastern Cape, where?

MGOQI: Just outside Fort Beaufort, north east of the town, on the hills, there you will see an institution that was established by Methodist missionaries. I was to learn later that there was quite a number of similar educational institutions, throughout the country, established by missionaries. To their credit, it must be said that they left a legacy of educating large numbers of Africans, who came to take advantage of educational opportunities. No wonder educational oases like Fort Hare University attracted students as far afield as Dr Kenneth Kaunda from Zambia and others from other African states.

Q: Ah, the town of Healdtown.

MGOQI: It was where Nelson Mandela also studied, he completed his matriculation there. Robert Sobukwe also studied there. A number of well-known personalities studied there. It was a missionary institution established by the Methodist Church and it was run that way, with evening services, which some of us avoided for no apparent reason. We just did not want to attend those church services. I remember our Warden had the burden of going around the hostels to check that all of us had gone, and my friend I would hide under one of the beds, until he left the room.

Q: Not to interrupt, but each detail here is so delicious. Your friends, who were these people? Your friends were classmates, or were they people who lived in the neighborhood?

MGOQI: Yes. In fact, as I was getting deeper into the schooling system, I was still struggling. I was still struggling with the road. Because after school I had my township friends who were not going to school.

Q: So these were neighbors.

MGOQI: At school they were neighbors, yes. At school I had my *school friends*. So I had two sets of friends. But I think, as time went on, my school friends had greater influence on me than my township friends, who kept pushing me in the direction of doing deeds of delinquency. So my school friends sort of, I think prevailed. They won my heart.

Q: Took the upper hand.

MGOQI: Yes. They took the upper hand.

Q: But you recognized them, yourself, perhaps, the ones who would lead you where you wanted to go.

MGOQI: Yes. And I still have them. We are still friends, even now.

Q: So a number of you went off to Healdtown.

MGOQI: To Healdtown High School, yes. And it was there that one's mind was going to open up to the wider world. I remember, there was literature that would circulate, of course under the desks, on Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Govan Mbeki, former President Mbeki's father.

Q: Really?

MGOQI: Yes. We would read and then [bang book shut abruptly], the teacher would be there, we'd close the book! Or we'd read over night. It literally had to be…

Q: Clandestine literature.

MGOQI: Clandestine literature, yes, on the politics of the country. Couldn't read the history openly.

Q: And Mandela was in prison at that time?

MGOQI: He was in prison at that time, yes. This is now '69, '70, when I went to Healdtown High School. So we'd read about Mandela and the ANC.

Q: The materials were banned, perhaps?

MGOQI: They were banned. Oh, they were banned. We were getting them from learners' fathers who were involved in politics underground. So we'd read, we'd be given the materials to read overnight, because they were circulating them.

Q: In Russia they would call it samizdat (self-published literature), which is the literature that is forbidden to go from hand-to-hand. So comparable to that in Eastern Europe.

MGOQI: So we would read about Mandela, we would read about Robert Sobukwe, all of these political characters and role players. We'd read about them. Incidentally, also at Healdtown, because we were going to be there for two years, in our Latin class, at the beginning of the second year, our Latin teacher passed away. And the class, because they knew I had this aptitude for Latin, I was very, very good, they asked me to teach the class.

Q: To teach?

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: You became a teacher of Latin.

MGOQI: I became a teacher.

Q: Yes, because there was no other teacher.

MGOQI: There was no other teacher and the principal wouldn't engage anyone, and we realized that if there was no one.

Q: Someone had to do it.

MGOQI: Yes, someone had to do it. I took it on.

Q: Was it a popular course at that time? Were many students studying Latin at that time?

MGOQI: Yes. Our whole class, in fact. We were in Form Five; we were in Class E. Form Five was divided into five classes: A, B, C, D. E was doing their general stream: Latin, History, Biology and all of that, including the languages, English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, my native language.

Q: Remarkable.

MGOQI: I taught them up to the time we were due to write examinations in November.

Q: You talked about the analytical content and I think there's the discipline of Latin, and the fact that it was work. What did Latin mean to you as a cultural entity? It's so distant from this place.

MGOQI: Yes, well, also because in the literature, in the translations you read, you get to know about the literature of Rome. You read about characters, the lawyers like Cicero, and all of that. So I was quite inspired by these personalities, these characters. In fact, my interest was ignited then, in studying about The Roman Empire—its ancient culture, its people at the time.

Q: Ah, so it was the Latin language, to some degree, that brought you to law.

MGOQI: Yes, to some degree, definitely. It did. Yes. Hence, in fact, from Healdtown, after I passed Matric in 1970. In '71, when I went to Fort Hare, I wanted to register for law. My benefactor said no. The bursary I was allocated was purely for social science. Already then I sensed that I was destined for law—so my interest in law grew.

Q: Who was the benefactor? Was it an individual?

MGOQI: It was a family, yes. The Geffen family in Kenilworth, one of the southern suburbs in Cape Town. They made the funds available, through the S.A. (South African) Institute of Race Relations, which is a body that still continues, to promote nonracialism today. But I got to know that they were the benefactors, when I was already at Fort Hare University, near the town of Alice, at other side of Fort Beaufort.

Q: In the '90s, if I remember, the S.A. Institute of Race Relations was considered a little bit old-fashioned. A little bit reactionary.

MGOQI: Yes, almost. Yes, definitely.

Q: But in the '60s and '70s it had a role to play in identifying students from disadvantaged backgrounds and raise funds for their education.

MGOQI: Yes, it became much more. Yes.

Q: So was there an individual benefactor who recognized you?

MGOQI: Well, yes. We applied to the Institute of Race Relations and then they allocated me an amount of money to enroll at the university of Fort Hare, which at the time was specifically designated for Xhosa-speaking students only; University of Zululand was for Zulu-speaking students only; University of Bophuthatswana was for Tswana-speaking students only and University of the North was for Venda-speaking students, Tsonga and Pedi-speaking students only and so on.

Q: So the bursary took you. You had no idea that you were going to study sociology, but the bursary led you in that direction.

MGOQI: Yes. Then I signed up for a B.A. social science degree there.

Q: Were you disappointed not to be a law student?

MGOQI: I was somewhat disappointed, yes. But I really looked forward to it. And the law students, you know, they were very proud. I still registered for basic courses like private law, for example. And I think, Roman law. Private law, and Roman- Dutch Law I. And I think I also did Roman Law I, as ancillary courses. But of course, I was doing social science, I couldn't take them to the second-year level and the third-year level. My majors in the final year were Sociology, Psychology and Social Work.

Q: You couldn't specialize.

MGOQI: Yes. So in '73, I was in my final year of social science. Quite interesting things were happening also, already, by that time. SASO (the South African Students' Organisation) was quite strong on campus, driven by the likes of Steven Biko, Barney Pityana, Harry Nengwekhulu, Henry Isaacs, Jerry Modisane, Ben Langa, Jeff Baqwa and others.

Q: Barney Pityana, Vice- the chancellor of UNISA (University of South Africa)?

MGOQI: Yes, he is currently the Vice-chancellor of UNISA. The literature kept flowing to us; it was all we were reading. We were reading also about Black political activists like Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin, Eldridge Cleaver, Nikki Giovanni, Margaret Walker and others.

Q: Clandestine.

MGOQI: Clandestine. But really, the fists were public.

Q: So the importance, then, was the year. It was '73 and there was a crescendo of activity in this area.

MGOQI: Yes. Political activities. I mean, from '72 already, there was the first mass walk-out of students from campus. There was a call by SASO for students to walk out of these Bantu universities—Bantustan, we were calling them.

Q: Did it happen simultaneously in all these universities?

MGOQI: Yes. It was a call from SASO. It was national. They didn't quite grasp the message at that time in '72. In '73, the events were just pushing us into political activity, because, for example, in '73, some students in one of the hostels, Beda Hostel; some students there were experiencing some poor quality of food, so they protested, and as part of their protest they went to stage a sit-in in the office of the rector, a certain Mr. De Wet, at the time. We knew, he was a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret right-wing political organization that was reputed to be running South Africa as an exclusivist state.

Q: The right wing diehards.

MGOQI: Yes, the diehards. So apparently he was so infuriated that he issued a letter of summary dismissal to the students, without any due process whatsoever.

Q: How many students were involved in that?

MGOQI: About 59 students. So as the student body, we said, "No, this cannot happen.

We must stand up for these students and launch a protest." So the following day, we planned this protest that was going to take place at one o'clock, when the lectures ended, at Freedom Square. I was part of the group that was directed to go to the women's hostel. And of course, as we headed there, we heard that the rector, De Wet, had called the police from the Ciskeian government. It was just billed as the Ciskei government then, because Sebe was the Prime Minister. As Sebe's police came for us, we had to run to safety. We ran across a stadium which was known as the Davidson Stadium. It became a joke that if the Olympic Games selectors were around, for sprinting I would have won a gold medal - sprinting across the stadium.

Q: Highly motivated.

MGOQI: And there were dogs, I could see the dogs coming for us. By the time we reached the other side of the stadium as a group—those of us who were fast—we could see some of our students who couldn't run had been caught by the dogs and they were being beaten up by the police with sjamboks (heavy leather whips).

Q: Whips, yes.

MGOQI: I was part of the group that was in the front. As we landed on the other side, some of these dogs were landing on the fence as we fell on the other side.

Q: Trained to attack.

MGOQI: Trained to attack. They were leaning against the fence. They just missed us narrowly. I could have won my gold medal not only just in track, I would have had two medals. One for sprinting…

Q: One for high jump.

MGOQI: For high jump.

Q: Pity they weren't there.

MGOQI: They must know their place in the world, know where to be at the right time.

Q: Maybe this is good training for Olympic athletes.

MGOQI: Yes. And of course, on the other side, the land there belonged to the Federal Theological Seminary, (its shortened form was FEDSEM) which was training ministers of religion, (Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, Congregationalists, etc.) from the diverse denominations there. So it was regarded as sacred ground. The reason why we're running to them, as well.

Q: I guess the dogs did not know that, however.

MGOQI: The dogs did not know that. So De Wet the rector, told the police that they must tell the Federal Seminary officials—and there was a lot of tension, of course, between Fort Hare and Fed Sem, because Fed Sem was liberal and progressive and they were always taking Fort Hare administration on for its conservative policies and on and on. So there was this ongoing war between Fed Sem and Fort Hare. This conflict from the University's side was led by a certain Prof Thom, who was the Dean of the Faculty of Law at Fort Hare.

Q: Wait, Fed Sem is…

MGOQI: Fed Sem is Federal Seminary. Federal Theological Seminary, but it was just known for short as Fed Sem.

Q: Ah, OK.

MGOQI: So he (De Wet) threatened that if we were not released, he was going to desecrate the grounds and get the police to go in, move in and take us out by force.

Q: He announced that?

MGOQI: Yes. By force. Because of the threat the negotiators, were going up and down for about three or four hours. The negotiators relayed the rector's message. Then Fed Sem tried to extract a guarantee from them that they would not attack us, because they were saying that we must move from the Fed Sem to the Great Hall where the students were already gathered, and that they wouldn't beat us up. So when they made that undertaking, that they wouldn't beat us up, we then filed and walked to the Great Hall. And when we got there, to our horror, we found how students had been beaten up; from the time the police arrived. Some were badly bitten by dogs, others beaten with batons by the Sebe police. There was even a joke doing the rounds that the Sebe police who were not educated, would demonstrate how a sub –A beats a B.Sc student or graduate, such that the degree would fall on one side, whilst the student/graduate would fall on another side.

They would find a student, they would go into their rooms. I mean, you enter into their room and it's like this, you know, there's only that entrance. And it's a room with a window - about half the size of a bed and then a desk. Students were made to jump. They would beat them up so much that the next option was to jump over. Some students were beaten up at their private parts and were bleeding profusely. It was bad. Once we were there, that afternoon, again, without any due process, we were all issued a letter that says, "You have been dismissed from Fort Hare University. You are summarily expelled."

Q: Did they have the names of those involved or did they just expel everybody?

MGOQI: They expelled everybody.

Q: Whether you were there or not?

MGOQI: Whether we were there or not.

Q: It was the entire class.

MGOQI: Yes, because they knew that those of us who had been arrested were part of this protest, and I think the idea was to close the university, in fact, because they did after that. They closed it temporarily. I was in my final year, and that was on the 6th of September. We were due to write our final exam around 10th of October. It was our final year, but we're forced to leave. We were all accompanied to Alice railway station to board a train to our various destinations around the country.

Q: So one month to graduation?

MGOQI: One month to graduation, yes. I was that close to graduation. Yes. And it ended just like that. You can imagine the bitterness that was in my heart at the time. We're escorted to our rooms, our respective rooms, to pick up our belongings and issued with a train ticket to go back to our respective destinations. And I was on my way to Cape Town. You can imagine, coming back home in my final year, and my parents were saying, "You wasted money, all these three years, we were hoping that you would graduate," and all of that. But I was strong, and then I said, "Look. This university so humiliated us, and me in particular, I'm not going back. Even when they called us back. I wouldn't go back there. I couldn't give them the honor of conferring a degree upon me, having done something so horrible as to end my university career so abruptly.

Q: Fort Hare?

MGOQI: I couldn't go back, because they really humiliated me. So, at the beginning of '74, I went to look for a job at the post office in Langa and also in that year, 1974, I married my wife, Dolly, whom I had met seven years earlier, when we were 17 and 18 years respectively. Today we have been married for 36 years, blessed with three children, Bulumko, (Wisdom) the eldest son, Lindiwe, (the Awaited one) who is married, with a daughter and a son and Nomvuyo, (our Joy) who is also married with one child, a daughter. We have a total of four grandchildren as our son also has one daughter, and is still unmarried. I worked at the post office for about 20 months, until about May 1975. I then joined Old Mutual, the insurance company, as a salesman, selling insurance. I worked there. And then, all this time, from '74, in fact, I re-registered with UNISA, to try to complete the degree that I did not complete. It took me another three years, until the end of 1976 to complete the same degree, remember, I was forced to leave Fort Hare University one month from completing. Who can compensate you for the loss of three years of your life?.

Q: To fill up the one month that was left?

MGOQI: The one month that was left. Because I then completed the courses that UNISA had prescribed, that I completed at the end of '76.

Q: Would it have been possible to go back to Fort Hare? You said you refused, you would have refused.

MGOQI: On principle, yes. I think I had developed a spirit of militancy which said I could make it in life with or without Fort Hare university and the oppression it represented, in the hands of those reactionary forces. I made a choice to sacrifice those years, and follow the hard road and am glad I did, in retrospect.

Q: But, in fact, was that an option? Could you have gone back?

MGOQI: I guess, because we had to apply and then they would consider your application and decide whether or not to re-admit you.

Q: You'd never get in.

MGOQI: No. Never. There was no guarantee I would have.

Q: As an outsider, I'm going to add my own reaction to Fort Hare when I saw it. I was very taken by the stark landscape. It's in a very lush and fertile part of the country, but when they built it they certainly decided to put it on a rock. I don't remember seeing a single tree. It's a lunar sort of landscape. So it's really stark.

MGOQI: You can understand, because it was a military fort, and so the soldiers, the military had meant it to be a strategic place to be able to see advancing hostile tribesmen from a distance and shoot them down, before they could reach the fort.

Q: Had to be able to see.

MGOQI: Yes, exactly. All around, for a good radius around. So I think it was planned strategically to be like that.

Q: It's on a hill.

MGOQI: It's on a hill, yes. So I then completed in '76, and already by then…

Q: So you completed what, the bachelor's degree?

MGOQI: The bachelor's degree in social science.(B.A Soc Sc) So, '77 I started working for an organization that was called the Cape Flats Committee for Interim Accommodation (CFCIA), which really meant working in informal settlements. What we were doing was to mobilize these communities through their leaders to articulate the desperate conditions they were living under, using the media as an instrument of struggle.

Q: So very much using your social science background.

MGOQI: Social science background, yes.

Q: So this was community building?

MGOQI: Yes, because I did my practicals for social work at a day hospital in Guguletu. So already, then, I was seeing that instead of going and doing case work, or group work, I rather should do community work. Already, I was beginning to sense that one needed engagement on a macro sort of level, because the problems were of a macro nature. They needed that kind of approach. So I got involved in informal settlements, mainly helping people in those informal settlements to mobilize themselves into committees. Helping them to for example, articulate their demands to the authorities. And that immediately put you in line with the authorities, as some kind of agitators.

Q: Troublemakers.

MGOQI: Troublemakers, yes. The fact that we're mobilizing communities one after another, all over. Me and that team were all over, the Cape Peninsula.

Q: Does that mean that the CFCIA was seen as a troublemaking organization?

MGOQI: Yes. Absolutely.

Q: It was a grassroots thing that came out of…

MGOQI: Exactly. Yes.

Q: Did it have funding?

MGOQI: It was getting funding from the Catholic Church, and other donors. The person who started it, a bearded man, Rommel Roberts, was seen by the police as a Communist. Anyone who opposed the government then was a Communist. And this guy had nothing to do with Communism. He was just a Catholic. He had been trained as a Priest, but I guess worldly desires diverted him to political activism.

Q: And he was what?

MGOQI: A Catholic sort of—he even trained, in fact, he trained for six years and just before his ordination he left. He didn't want to become a priest, for whatever reason. He then became a political activist.

Q: And he was of what background? Was he part of the community or did he come from outside the community?

MGOQI: No, he was part of the community. He was part of the Catholic community. And so, I worked there from '77, to '79. I even went to places like Crossroads. In fact, when Jesse Jackson came in '79, we took him around. By that time I was employed as the

CFCIA agent, that eventually gave its work over to the Western Province Council of Churches because, in a sense, the values were of a Christian sort of nature.

Q: What was the meaning or the utility of Jesse Jackson's visit? Did that gather…

MGOQI: It highlighted the plight of people living in informal settlements. Here was this man, who was larger than life, who came all the way from America and was not intimidated by the authorities here.

Q: Was that the purpose of his visit, to draw attention to that?

MGOQI: Yes. It really helped, a great deal. I even still have, pictures with him. I was still a young man, and my hair was black.

Q: Well, likewise with Jesse Jackson. And me, for that matter.

MGOQI: And then, of course, in '79, I was a regular visitor to the U.S. Information Center, in Plein Street, Cape Town. People like Frank Sassman, Ronnie Hendricks, Aubrey Mathabathe, Hamilton Mahola, made the Center a place with a different atmosphere, a different vibe. It became an oasis, in a desert, as it were.

Q: Service, yes.

MGOQI: In Plein Street, Cape Town, yes. Borrowing books and all of that. We got exposure to writings of U.S writers, like Maya Angelou, (I know why the caged bird sings), Shirley Chisholm, (Unbought and Unbossed), Eldridge Cleaver (Soul on Ice), Mari Evans (I am a Black Woman) James Baldwin (Notes of a Native Son), Lerone Bennett Jr., (The Challenge of Blackness), Langston Hughes (Fight for Freedom)

Q: What got you there in the first place?

MGOQI: I think I got invited to one of the functions and then from there, one thing led to another.

Q: But it was because you were a community organizer, you had been identified as important in the community.

MGOQI: I had been identified, yes. And they knew also that I was a social worker, and all of that. So when there was this opportunity to go on the Operation Crossroads Africa(OCA) program, I was then selected. Remember that they were having some interviews then, and I came to explain what I was doing and all of that. They told me, "Yes, you have been selected to go," and I said, "What, to America?" "Yeah." "Wow!"

Q: Did you meet Bart Rousseve at that time?

MGOQI: Yes. Bart, I know Bart. I met Bart at the time. Bart was there, yes.

Q: Bart was my boss.

MGOQI: Is that so? An incredible man. He always had a lot of impact, on me. Confidence and all of that. Organization skills, and all of that. They were just incredible. So he was a positive influence.

Q: Well, on the subject of Bart—because he had such a vast influence in America, in South Africa, and in other African countries, in all American communities. I was at the funeral and it was an amazing collection of people, people from every possible social background. What was the meeting with Bart Rousseve? Let's dwell on Bart for a moment.

MGOQI: You know, he came across to me as someone who was on a mission. He had a sense of mission, that guy. That's how he came across to me. He came across as someone who has got a sense of a calling, a sense of purpose, and he was quite passionate in his pursuit of that particular purpose, he had a sense of mission. You could see that he was sold on becoming a catalyst, a change agent, and you could see that he was really given to unlocking the potential in each and every person whom he came into contact with. You got the sense that he just believed that there was something in you that had to be unlocked, that had to be unearthed, and he was constantly reminding you. And you just couldn't resist. Coming out and let go of this, and let it come out and blossom in you. He really had that. That's my recollection of the man. He was never an idle person.

I never saw him, you know, just relaxed. He was always running around as if he was someone who knows that time is of the essence, and time is running out. He was always on the run. I remember when he came to welcome us and give us a briefing, and also, on arrival in Miami, in Florida, he was there speaking to us and arranging other speakers to come and give us an orientation. He was with us right up to the end of our trip in New York, when we had to come back. My group traveled from Miami to Orlando (Florida), Atlanta (Georgia), San Francisco (California), Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Morgan town (West Virginia), Washington D.C (Washington) and ending in New York.

Q: He unlocked potential, he saw in each individual… Was this something, as a student of Latin, as a social activist and organizer, did this have resonance with something you already thought about yourself or was it a new concept?

MGOQI: I think it was a new concept and a new style of relating to people, because right up to that time, you did not have someone—your teachers at university for example, were people who were fairly aloof. They did not have any relationship with you as individual students, as such. In fact, some of them were even hostile. I remember, I was mentioning I studied private law, and Roman, Dutch law. There was this guy, De Haan, a white Afrikaner lecturer, actually insulting us, this guy, saying, "You people, you look to Roman Dutch law through your Bantu eyes." Now, Bantu was a pejorative and derogatory term referring to Black people in general.

Q: Very pejorative.

MGOQI: Very pejorative. “Whereas, in me, I have Dutch blood running through my veins.”

Q: He said that?

MGOQI: Yes, he said that in class. We were mad. We protested, “This guy must be dismissed!” But to whom are we saying this? De Wet.

Q: A Broederbond.

MGOQI: Yes, a Broederbond. I mean, I reported that to another side.

Q: So, in contrast, you met Bart, and this was a different kind of mentorship.

MGOQI: A different kind of mentorship, yes. Someone who takes an interest not just in you, as a group but in you individually. When he speaks you sense that he is addressing you personally. He gives himself time to address you cooperatively, you know? It was a different style. You sensed in your bones that he meant to influence you positively. He dressed smartly, to impress, he was always neat and tidy. He had a sense of self-worth without which, we feel inferior, are insecure and inadequate. Bart occupied his space with confidence in himself and with a firm sense of where he was going. As they say in the Johnnie Walker advert “to a man who knows where he is going, the crowd opens the way”

Q: You just compared him to a teacher.

MGOQI: Yes, who takes an interest in you, personally.

Q: He wasn’t a teacher but he had the same function, but did better than the others.

MGOQI: Better than the others, definitely. He established a rapport with those with whom he interacted, and one that was predicated on respect and dignity, for each and every individual. He had an aura around him that said you were in the presence of someone special, someone extra-ordinary. In their book Henry and Richard Blackaby quote an observation of Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley after he met Robert Lee, whom he describes in the following terms as a leader with character, which moved others to follow:
“I have met many of the great men of my time, but Lee alone impressed me with the feeling that I was in the presence of a man who was cast in a grander mold, and made of different and finer metal than all other men”. Such was the character and personality of Bart.

Q: It was clear in the way he spoke and in the way his body moved.

MGOQI: Yes, that he respected you. You were a person of worth. In his presence you wanted to act honorably, for his sake and your sake, as well.

Q: You can't teach that to a person.

MGOQI: No, you can't teach that. You either have it or you don't.

Q: The person either has that…

MGOQI: Or doesn't have it, yes. He made no effort.

Q: Those of us who worked for him did learn from him, I think. I don't know, whether it's born or learned, I don't know, but he gave us the model to go by. On both sides. Well. That's Bart.

MGOQI: Yes. That was Bart.

Q: He certainly was here for a purpose.

MGOQI: Yes. There are people like that. I mean, I did not mention something that was quite important, that also impacted my life. In '73, just before we left—actually, a month before we left—by that time I had been elected chairman of the social work student association, and my deputy was Philip Guma. We had arranged for a social work students' meeting to be addressed by an outside speaker. We had had Bennie Khoapa, who was apparently the director of the Black Community Programs (BCP).

Q: From where?

MGOQI: From Durban, which was part of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the projects. And we heard that he was a social worker himself, who had a fairly radical perspective on social work. So I wanted this person to come and address students at Fort Hare.

Q: And you, as the president of the student association, decided to bring him.

MGOQI: Chairman, yes. We had to invite him to come and address us. Of course, no later had we embarked on that project, we learned that the rector, Mr. De Wet had found out.

Q: I would have guessed that.

MGOQI: I don't know how, but the rector found out. And apparently he said, "There is no Bennie Khoapa who is going to put his foot on Fort Hare campus." So the students learned about this, that Benny may not come. We learned the day before. Then students said, "You, as Chairman, and Philip, must then go and meet Bennie in King William's Town." One author, William Cowper, who wrote the hymn, "God moves in mysterious

ways, his wonders to perform." was actually right. He made me to reflect deeply about had happened around this time. Because up until this day I would not be able to tell you, without cell phones or even telephones, how we found our way, to Mount Coke Hospital, where Benny Khoapa was waiting for us. I'd been to King William's Town before, but from a different angle. We hitched a hike from Alice to King William's Town. And then from King William's Town, we hiked to a village called Mount Coke, because we heard that he is going to a meeting at the hospital. I think he was also running away from the security branch/police.

Q: Did he know that he was not going to make it to Fort Hare? Or you went there to tell him.

MGOQI: I don't know. He somehow got wind of it. The way things happened was that when we got to Mount Coke, in this village hospital, he was expecting us as students from Fort Hare. He just knew us as students from Fort Hare that were coming to see him. So we got there and we introduced ourselves, and I remember that he was sitting on the floor. And he said, "Well, gentlemen, sit down. Let me share with you what I was going to communicate in my address to Fort Hare Social Work students." He spoke for some time. I think for about an hour or so, he then said, "I'd like you, before you return, to go with me, because I'd like you to meet my friend." We didn't know who this friend was. We got into his car, he drove back to King William's Town, and into Ginsberg. And we found ourselves in front of Steven Biko's home. We entered the house, and Steve was in the room. We could see that he was in one of the rooms as a banned person he could only be with one person at a time. The security police were teeming outside, waiting to pounce on him, should he be with more than one person at a time.

Q: You were in the Eastern Cape. He was from Durban, but he introduced you to Biko.

MGOQI: Because they were working together, with Steven Biko…

Q: In your own area.

MGOQI: Yes. They were working together at that level, with Steven Biko, yes. That is, with black community programs.

Q: And you knew, of course, who Biko was?

MGOQI: I had heard about Steve Biko. I remember, one time they were having a congress at Fed Sem, but for one reason or another we were not able to be there, to be admitted, or something like that. So I knew when we sat there, yes. We entered the room, in fact, we entered the house, and then Steve was in the room, inside. He could only see one person at a time, or be seen with one person at a time.

Q: He was banned.

MGOQI: He was banned, yes. And as we approached the house we could see there was

two security police vehicles in the area, because he was always under surveillance.

Q: You went in one at a time to see him.

MGOQI: One at a time, yes. Philip was the first to go, and I then followed. I remember as we were shaking hands, he was saying to me, "I'm pleased that students these days are able to leave the ivory tower of the university and come to feel the pulse of the community." I mean, those words are etched into my memory from that time. I've never forgotten those words. Like Bart Rousseve, he had this imposing presence about him. Intuitively, something told you, you were in the presence of someone very special. He saw us as people who are descending from the ivory tower of the university, and coming down to the village level of the people, to feel the pulse of the community.

Q: When he used the words "ivory tower," was he being ironical, or was he actually paying tribute?

MGOQI: I think—because you know at the time there was this thing, that students must actually leave the universities for that matter.

Q: So he was teasing you.

MGOQI: Because universities have become too elitist and therefore, out of touch with what was happening on the ground.

Q: So when he said this, it had two or three different meanings.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: It meant, "You should be more involved in the community, but thank you for doing so."

MGOQI: Exactly. Yes. That's the message I got. And I've always remained true to that. Everything that I've been doing, in a sense, I've been influenced by that. Whether I was lawyering, later, I wanted to do the kind of lawyering that kept me in touch with ordinary people. Whether I was doing social work, I was doing the kind of social work that would not be too elitist, but one that would place me in a position to feel the pulse of the community and do something about it. In the public service as Land Restitution Commissioner, I tried to be people-centered and sensitive to what people had to say about their lives. Throughout my career, I have tried to be respecting of other human beings, even when they had problems, they themselves could not resolve, I still respected them.

Q: Now, as I was asking earlier, did this—this didn't change you, it strengthened a certain aspect that you already had.

MGOQI: That I already had, yes.

Q: Did you ever see Biko again?

MGOQI: No, because after ’73 I was here, then of course up until ’77 I was still here in Cape Town. I only went to attend his funeral in ’77, when he had died. I was just reading the literature, we kept reading them, and I read his “I WRITE WHAT I LIKE”, and that was a collection of pieces he was writing. I kept in touch with it, yes.

Q: So his funeral was in ’77.

MGOQI: In ’77. September. Yes. He died on the 12th of September.

Q: You remember the date, therefore it’s a very important date.

MGOQI: A very important date, yes, the 12th of September. Yes, we went down. We had a member—in that year of his funeral, in my house we had an American journalist who became a friend of ours. Andrew Silk.

Q: Andrew Silk?

MGOQI: Yes. Andrew Silk was a journalist who was on a fellowship—I think it was a Ford Foundation fellowship—and came to do some research here in South Africa. And then his research took him to doing a project on workers. I remember he was working, and the project was called The Workers Speak. So he would go and come, because at the time I was living in Guguletu, in my house at N.Y 117. And around that time, just before we left for Steve Biko’s funeral, at the back of our house, the house of a security branch member was petrol bombed. So there was quite a heavy presence of police surveilling that area.

Q: So we’re away from the campus now. When you say “our house,” where was this?

MGOQI: The house in Guguletu, in the township, at N.Y 117, I was married for three years by then.

Q: Back in the township, OK. Andrew Silk lived there?

MGOQI: No, Andrew Silk lived here in town.

Q: I see.

MGOQI: But he would visit us, and it was quite unusual for a white person. You stuck out like a sore thumb, visiting.

Q: Plus, the authorities did not like it.

MGOQI: They did not like it. They did not like it at all.

Q: In fact, it was considered illegal, I think?

MGOQI: Exactly. Yes.

Q: But Andrew Silk was one of those who defied the rules and just went.

MGOQI: He just came, yes.

Q: Was he ever confronted that you know of, by the authorities? Do you think that he was ever confronted?

MGOQI: Yes, I think he was stopped a few times, a lot of times, but in this particular location it was even more serious because they had this incident that had happened. So as he parked his car, they immediately called him, and he came out of the house. They searched his car and they found his tape recorders, documents, The Workers Speak. They immediately took him to the police station. When we got there, we learned that they had taken him away from there to Caledon Square here in town. So then came to terms with the thought that it could be serious.

The arrangement was that he was going to leave with us to King William's Town. We were going to leave in a Kombi from Cape Town. We were going to drive in a Kombi to Eastern Cape. We realized this was so serious, we contacted the lawyers, Mallinick, Ress, Richmond, and Closenberg, at the time, to put him on the case. Because we couldn't postpone, now we're leaving. By midnight, we learned he was still in detention. So there was no way Andrew was going to leave with us. Anyway, we went. By Sunday, when we were coming back from Eastern Cape, we read in the Cape Herald in Port Elizabeth, that Andrew Silk had left the country. I think he panicked. Being detained, he could easily end up also being killed like Steve Biko, who died a tragic death, while in detention, a year later, in 1977.

Q: Well, it's possible, since he was an American citizen, the consulate might have advised him to leave, maybe. He was a journalist—you say he was here on a grant of some sort?

MGOQI: On a grant, yes. I think from the Ford Foundation.

Q: The Ford Foundation, OK.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: And so he cut short his visit?

MGOQI: Cut short his visit, yes. Even left his car to one of my friends, Joe Ndiki, a Volkswagen, a small Volkswagen. Joe took that car, that he got as some kind of inheritance.

Q: Well deserved. Now, he was supposed to—what, stay a year?

MGOQI: I'm not sure. But it wasn't that long.

Q: The police might have said, "We will release you on certain conditions, you must leave immediately," or something like that.

MGOQI: I'm sure. We don't know what happened between him and the state police.

Q: You don't?

MGOQI: Yes. And he left. But I did have the privilege—because in '79 I was there in the U.S., when we were ending our program, Operation Crossroads Africa, I spent a few days with him in New York. And then in 1980, I think, I went back to the U.S. I'm not sure what program this was.

Q: You were sent by the U.S. government?

MGOQI: 1980. No, Andrew actually wrote to me, saying "What else do you know?" By then, he had cancer. He said that : " We have such a precarious and tenuous hold on life. Now we have a firm hold on life, the next moment we have lost that grip on life" Those words are still with me. By the end of 1980 he died of cancer. And my children were so attached to him, because they would play with him, whenever he was around.

Q: He was relatively young, I guess.

MGOQI: Yes, he was young. He was young. He was more or less our age at the time.

Q: When you saw him in New York, did he ever discuss what his intentions had been in South Africa? What was he after? What was the point of his grant? Just to learn more about the way the society worked?

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: Did he file stories, as a journalist?

MGOQI: Yes. He was writing even for the local newspapers.

Q: So from the time you met him to the time he died, that was just two or three years.

MGOQI: Yes. And he was about to get married, I remember. He had Nancy, who was his fiancée. I met Nancy when I was there. We'd go out to have lunch with them and all of it. Sadly, she must have been widowed by his death. We even have pictures with Nancy.

Q: Was he with the newspaper? Was he an independent kind of attitude?

MGOQI: I think he was an independent freelancer.

Q: Phew. Andrew Silk.

MGOQI: Andrew Silk, yes.

Q: I'll have to find out more about him.

MGOQI: Yes. A person, perhaps, that you could contact, who would know something about him, was one of the lawyers who was also involved with him. That was Richard Rosenthal. I had Richard's cell, I contacted him.

Q: So he's a South African lawyer who knew Andrew Silk.

MGOQI: Yes, he's in his seventies now. But he's still practicing.

Q: Right here, yes? Around the corner?

MGOQI: Yes. Around the corner.

Q: OK. Well, here were are, we put you in '79. We've got you on your OCA.

MGOQI: OCA, beautiful program, started in Miami, Florida, went to Orlando, went to see these various interesting places and to Atlanta in Georgia. We visited the Martin Luther King Jr. leaderships center, old age homes, reading beautiful poetry, and cultural functions, and, of course, entertainment. It was juicy.

Q: I know, I was there.

MGOQI: But, I mean, it just shows how Apartheid, as a social system of control, impacts itself on you. Now, our escort takes us to this place, I think it's a striptease place.

Q: In Atlanta?

MGOQI: Yes, in Atlanta, Georgia. This bar. This club, or something. I'm traveling with a fellow called Howard Eybers, he was there. He was a trainee sort of minister of religion.

Q: From?

MGOQI: From South Africa, a graduate in Theology from the University of the Western Cape. So our Escort had the two of us, taken us to this place. We watched these things happening, these women would come and gradually take their clothes off. They were white women. And then there comes the interval. Now, at the interval we're standing in the back close to the bar, the counter where they serve the drinks. We were helping ourselves to drinks, feeling sort of aloof there, standing there. Then this white woman comes to the end of it. She's just wearing a see-through—I mean, she's got nothing on,

but wearing a see-through dress, like a night thing. And she says to me, "Can I dance with you?" I say, "What?" Because immediately, you know, there comes to my mind, "This is a white woman, and I am at this strip club, and what if a police van stops suddenly?" Even a police van—I'm thinking about this, a South African police van—stopping just outside and finding me here, dancing with this white woman. And it all is in the newspapers.

Q: And you're a dead man.

MGOQI: Yes, so I say to her, "What?" She says, "I want to dance." And I think in my mind that when I say, "I am from South Africa," she will understand, that black men may not dance with a White woman. That's how things are back home.

Q: She didn't understand.

MGOQI: She didn't know. So I said to her, "I am from South Africa!" She says, "What about Africa?" She didn't even say South Africa. "What about Africa?" I say, "I am from South Africa," and I stop there, figuring that she must have interpreted that to mean that as a South African who is black, I may not dance with a white woman. Then when I realize that she does not understand, I say, like a fourteen-year-old boy, "Let's go!" I get up and I say, "All right, Howard, let's go! Let's go home."

Q: So this was a moment of illumination.

MGOQI: Yes. I said, "Howard! Let's go home before we get in trouble!"

Q: It was like a psychic attack.

MGOQI: The thing about it is, God, apartheid follows us wherever we go. You have this imagination of the police van, and police. "Oh, you're dancing with a white woman here? Come, come, come."

Q: So apartheid was by your side in Atlanta. Right there.

MGOQI: Yes, it was always there. I could see the South African police. I'm not even imagining it as an American police van. I don't think I had seen one. So the big van in my mind was South African police van/vehicle.

Q: You were ending up in a police van.

MGOQI: So I said, "Howard, let's go home."

Q: Two shots.

MGOQI: This is too much. This woman is naked! She wants to dance with me! How do I get out of here? This is a scandal. This is too much.

Q: Well, I mean, maybe this gave you a different perspective on apartheid.

MGOQI: Yes. People were so free outside. They didn't have all these inhibitions and constraints. But I couldn't take it. I said, "Howard, let's run out of this place as fast as we can. This is trouble. I know trouble from a distance. This is it."

Q: So it was your escort who got you into this.

MGOQI: Yes, when I look at her, she's laughing. Her name was Jean, and Jean was laughing and laughing. Well, she had left us, she was going to come later. I said, "No! Come now. Come now! There's trouble here!"

Q: Come now or never.

MGOQI: So I just left the woman standing there. I think she must have said, "Wow, what is wrong with this guy?" as I darted. Let's get out of here. That is as real as it ever gets. That was too much. So anyway, we came back to New York and…

Q: Sorry, it's hard to get onto another subject because this was a moment of great drama and great illumination. Well. I guess it speaks for itself.

MGOQI: Yes. America.

Q: Let the transcript reflect that both the interviewer and the interviewee are weeping from laughter.

MGOQI: I'll never forget that experience.

Q: Well, they call it the land of opportunity.

MGOQI: Yes. Some of us would take that to mean one thing.

Q: So you were able to process this. So this was very concrete evidence that America was a bit different, things were a bit different.

MGOQI: It was the land of the free. Yes. Land of freedom. It was a lovely experience, the totality of the experience. It was quite a culture shock of some sort. Things are in your face in America.

Q: It sounds as if that particular experience had a certain loveliness also.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: So this is a very, very strong memory.

MGOQI: A very strong memory. I pictured my wife and the newspapers…

Q: That's right, you had just been married.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: You pictured newspapers?

MGOQI: Yes, newspapers appearing, "Wallace is dancing with naked women in America."

Q: Proving what the regime had always said, that America's a bad influence.

MGOQI: Yes. I'm not going to be part of this. I'm getting out of here! My other experience there, which was also rather embarrassing, was some Sunday afternoon. I'm wearing, like now, casual, but it's suiting. So I go out to this hotel. There's a hotel that has upon it a rotating floor right at the top.

Q: Yes, yes.

MGOQI: Then I go up there, and I'm planning to spend a fair amount of time in this hotel looking, because it had a radius of some fifty kilometers of viewing.…

Q: Are we in Atlanta here?

MGOQI: Yes. Atlanta.

Q: The Hyatt, maybe? No. Anyway.

MGOQI: So I go up to this hotel, I go up to the top, and a waiter comes, and I didn't take my wallet. I think I had five dollars, or something, or two dollars. I can't recall. But whatever I had, this lady, comes and brings a glass of orange juice. Orange juice, I think, was about seventy-five cents, then? I think I had one dollar. Then the lady says…

Q: She gives you a six dollar bill.

MGOQI: No, I think she charged one dollar and fifty cents. I said, "What? For orange juice?" I said, "Lady, I am so sorry. I only have one dollar." I was also aware there's a culture of tipping here. So I was saying, "Here, I'm short of the one-fifty, plus no money for tipping." I was so embarrassed, I just gobbled that juice and I couldn't sit, because this lady, was going to be looking at me. "Look at this gentleman. He's wearing a suit yet he's got no money." Then I immediately decided I would just go away; go back to the hotel, rather. And my whole afternoon was spoiled by that. I went back. Hey, America is so expensive, man.

Q: Yes, well, that same orange juice today would be much more.

MGOQI: It would be much more. Yes, much more. I remember. I think it was one dollar fifty and I only had one dollar, and I felt so bad.

Q: Lessons learned. When you go to a hotel with a rotating level, have ten dollars.

MGOQI: Have ten dollars, yes. Never leave your wallet behind. I thought it was embarrassing, so. Anyway, that trip ended. It was quite a great eye opener for me. I came back to South Africa. It was already the 80's.

Q: Wait, wait. An "eye opener?" We know what opened your eyes with the bar and the girl—let me rephrase the question. That's my fault, for making it so silly. What other things struck you, and changed your approach to seeing how societies are formed? Or should we try that one later?

MGOQI: No, I think I was generally just seeing the freedom of people. The interaction between black and white, the openness, embracing, the zeal for life, the common bond that you could see. These were people of the same country working towards the same sort of purpose, and all of these were things that were lacking back home, because apartheid was about apartness. Black and white interaction on the basis of mutual respect was something that was not there.

Q: So, also, a sense of nationhood.

MGOQI: A sense of nationhood. I was very impressed by that.

Q: What do you think Americans wanted at that time? If they had a common purpose, what was that purpose, other than becoming rich?

MGOQI: I got the sense that, to the extent that they were a democratic country, that they were electing their leaders and all of that jointly. They were moving, in a sense, behind whatever vision the leadership of the country had articulated. I was aware of the nuances, of course, of the Democratic Party and the…what's the other?

Q: Republican. Right. You meant the two rival parties.

MGOQI: Yes. But I mean, even in spite of that you could see this sense of nationhood, which back home we did not have. The freedom.

Q: Was this part of the exhilaration of South Africa today? As a visitor, I sense an enormous sense of nationhood here. I see the flag everywhere, I see South Africans very freely mingling whenever there is an opportunity. I see a sense of humor that seems to go throughout the various communities. Among other things, is it that sense of nationhood that has made such a lively atmosphere at this time?

MGOQI: Yes, and even the symbolism of statues—I remember when we were in

Washington, DC, visiting the museums, and reading about the history of the country, looking at the statutes that were celebrating the history of the place. You just were overwhelmed with this country. I said, "Wow, man, this country is just something else."

Q: What were some of the monuments and statues that made an impression? Perhaps the Lincoln memorial?

MGOQI: The Lincoln memorial, definitely.

Q: Did you ever go to Mount Vernon? The residence of President Washington?

MGOQI: No.

Q: What about the museums on the Mall, the Smithsonian?

MGOQI: I went to some of the museums there. The Smithsonian was one such museum. The Holocaust Museum I also visited in Washington D.C and other less renowned ones.

Q: What was it that gave you this impression of—you mentioned the symbolism of the physical objects, especially in Washington, DC. The White House, perhaps? The Congress, up on the Hill?

MGOQI: Yes. It was just incredible. You just were wishing, coming back wishing, "Oh, my country. If my country also were to take some lessons from this."

Q: Do you feel your country did take some lessons?

MGOQI: Oh, no. Definitely not at that time.

Q: I mean eventually.

MGOQI: Eventually, yes. Most definitely yes. At that time, no. In the '70s, '80s, the country was moving in the opposite direction.

Q: Tell me about that, because '76 political events here and some violence and a tremendous energy for change, and yet the oppression came down very hard. So do you feel that after '76 things went backwards?

MGOQI: They went backwards big time. In fact, went worse, because as the struggle was intensifying, so was the repression also, as a counter force. So it was intensifying as well.

Q: Was it intensifying in degree and also in the manner and the practical applications? Let me interrupt for just—Now, you were saying, Wallace, as the struggle intensified, so did the repression. What were people imagining at the time? Was hope being taken away from people? Was there any sense that there would be a resolution?

MGOQI: Well, I think hope was there. It would be difficult to say. I think what was also sustaining that struggle was witnessing events, for example, even from 1975, with FRELIMO (the Liberation Front of Mozambique) in Mozambique coming through…

Q: So there were other examples in the region that showed that it could happen.

MGOQI: Yes, that really sustained our hope. The continuing mobilization of the political parties, especially the Black Consciousness Movement; I don't think due credit is sufficiently given to that.

Q: To the Black Consciousness Movement?

MGOQI: Yes, in mobilizing. Because then the ANC and the PAC, were banned. A lot of the work was underground. For some strange reason, BCM was still able to organize certain events, not overtly politically. For example, the mobilization around community programs, initiatives. I can tell you that in 1980, when I came back, because of the disturbances in schools—in fact, Cape Town experienced this '76-type violence in the August of 1980. It was a widespread sort of disturbance in the schools. Pupils were dropping out. We became part of an initiative to help students to cope with the schooling demands, for example, by forming an NGO that was called Masifundise.

Q: What about the organization in Guguletu from before? Were you still with that?

MGOQI: Yes. This was an ambitious project. We were organizing bursaries and also organizing places like where the church and bank go. We repaired a building where students could come to study, because most of them were coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was a building that belonged to the Anglican Church, in Langa.

Q: So you went from being a young man who escaped school to, on the other extreme, being someone who really considered it important for the community to adopt schooling.

MGOQI: Education is very important, yes. So then in the '80's we formed another organization, Masifundise.

Q: Masifundise, which means "let us educate."

MGOQI: We organized winter schools, to get senior students, also from UCT (University of Cape Town) to come and give classes, and I myself, I started in 1980, to study law by correspondence.

Q: UNISA.

MGOQI: UNISA, yes. (University of South Africa)

Q: That's what you had wanted to do earlier.

MGOQI: I wanted to. And what reignited that interest, was that when I was saying that by 1979, I was working for the Western Province Council of Churches, mobilizing communities in the informal settlements, and on one of those visits—because periodically we would have to host someone coming from overseas—there was this fellow from the Netherlands who wanted to be accompanied to one of the squatter camps, Crossroads. On our way back from there, he said to me, "Wow, this place is so depressing, and this work you are doing mobilizing people, is this what you are going to be doing for your lifetime?" I said, "No, I would have actually loved, to become a lawyer, but I don't have the means, and my parents don't have the means, for me to do that." He went back to the Netherlands and wrote me a letter saying that—and in fact, he asked even when he was here—"Why do you want to do law?" I said, "I would want to study and become a public interest lawyer, and use the law as an instrument of social justice." He said, "Write a memo setting out why it is you want to study law and I'll see what I can do." I did and he wrote back saying that the Algemene Diakonale Bureau van die Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (A Christian Organization) of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands had agreed to sponsor me to study law. I could not believe that this was happening to me. It was a major breakthrough, a turning point, a defining moment, that changed the course of my life forever. The timing and everything was perfect.

Q: He did that? A visitor who met you for half a day had a strong impression of you and went to people in South Africa from the church?

MGOQI: No, he went to the church in the Netherlands.

Q: And got the nations to sponsor you for correspondence study at UNISA. Remarkable.

MGOQI: So in 1980 I registered with UNISA for five courses including Latin. Remember Latin I?

Q: I remember Latin, the beginning of everything.

MGOQI: The foundation of everything. And I did. I pulled all five of them, and then I said, "I am studying law by correspondence, it's such a dry experience." I would rather be in a university. But then, 1980, if I still wanted to go to UCT—it was good, because I'm not going back to Fort Hare. I was expelled from Fort Hare, and I'm not going back. So my option is to go to UCT, but I had to apply for a Ministerial permit to be admitted. So by that time, my wife and I were now in Langa, in a rented house there.

So I wrote this long letter saying that I would love to study law, I'm just not going to be in residence, I've got a house in Langa that we are renting, I'm going to be commuting on a daily basis by taxi. I just want to attend lectures, and also the law library, and all of that. And I cannot go back to Fort Hare, it is 1005 kilometers from Cape Town and all of that.

Q: Bad memories also.

MGOQI: So then I was granted the permit to study at UCT. I remember that the lady who

was the assistant to the dean of the faculty of law said, "Look, because of your good results with UNISA and in particular, Latin, because students here can't qualify, because of the difficulties they have with Latin, so you are definitely the person worthy to be considered for admission." And I was admitted.

Q: A friendly person.

MGOQI: Yes, very friendly. Mrs. Baxter, who is now in retirement there. Pat Baxter.

Q: Assistant dean?

MGOQI: Assistant to the dean of the faculty of law. She's an elderly lady, now. I remember that even when I came back from Pretoria—this was when I was appointed as city manager of the city of Cape Town—I invited her for lunch. We had lunch, and thanked her for the kindness, she showed me when I joined UCT. She had no idea what I was to become, but treated me with respect and dignity. She was overwhelmed by the gesture of someone who has a busy schedule, like a City Manager, yet would find time to have lunch with a retired White lady. At the time she showed me such kindness, the environment was very hostile. She could have done like others, and nothing could have seemed odd, but she expressed confidence in me, and it impacted me greatly. I began to be careful about lumping people together, and label all of them "bad". I began to differentiate, and know that there are good and bad people, and it had nothing to do with race. I learnt that small acts of kindness like this can change people's attitudes fundamentally.

Q: And you later were a city official in the city? We'll get to that later.

MGOQI: Yes, we'll get to that later. So I then studied law from '81 to '84 at UCT. Incidentally, also my bursary was augmented by the humanitarian, Karl Popper?

Q: OSI (Open Society Institute)? Soros?

MGOQI: No, not George Soros. Who's the guy, who was that? Karl Popper, an American philanthropist that was his name.

Q: What's his nationality?

MGOQI: It was an American, I remember.

Q: Bob Heath?

MGOQI: Popper, it was the Karl Popper Foundation.

Q: What nationality was the foundation?

MGOQI: American.

Q: So an American foundation increased your bursary?

MGOQI: Yes, I think it was the Karl Popper Foundation. They were one of my benefactors. But I completed the studies in '84, and true to my original purpose, I said I wanted to go to do public interest law. The Legal Resources Centre (LRC) had been established a few years earlier by former Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson. He had started the Legal Resources Centre with Geoff Budlender. There was an office in Pretoria, and they had just opened an office here in Cape Town in '83. That's the year before I qualified. So in '85, they started what they called a fellowship program, which was like an orientation program for a year, for law graduates who wanted to practice public interest law. So I came in for a year to do this fellowship program; it lasted until '85. And then, of course, to be admitted as an attorney, I had to go and do articles of clerkship. And that's where Richard Rosenthal comes in.

Richard and I had met a few years earlier, while I was doing the work around informal settlements, because when we needed lawyers I would call Richard's firm, Syfret Godlonton-Fuller Moore Inc., Richard, is a very socially conscious guy—he's sort of Jewish in background. So he understands quite a bit about issues of suffering and of oppression and all of that. So he would come forward and act for the people, pro bono, without people having to pay. So we developed that relationship, and, in a sense, my involvement also in working in those communities inculcated in me a confidence that the law has a potential for extricating people, and defending their rights. The law could come to the aid of poor people.

Q: I was going to ask, and I didn't want to interrupt, in a situation which you say was deteriorating—the oppression greater—nevertheless, you felt that the law was a useful instrument?

MGOQI: It was. There was one specific incident, for example, that really rekindled my confidence in the law. While I was mobilizing in the area of Kraaifontein, the inspectors from the Stellenbosch Divisional Council at the time, knew that African women, coming from the Eastern Cape, or from outside of Cape Town, were only permitted to be with their husbands for fourteen days. After fourteen days they had to leave the area. They would then raid these areas. For example, there's an area in Kraaifontein, the company there called Everite manufactures cement pipes and all of that. So they would erect temporary structures and the women would come and join them. The company did not have facilities for married men to live with their wives. It only had single quarters, yet they knew that a majority of their employees were in fact married men. The company also knew that these men were forced to go and squat in the bushes, when their wives visited them. And these inspectors would raid, you know during the day or at night, any time

Q: To make sure they were gone?

MGOQI: Yes, raid them and arrest them and all of that, and then the men would have to

go and pay fines and all of that. So in this one instance, there was a fellow called Fredericks there. The fellows came and demolished this structure without following the procedures prescribed in the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, there were procedures that were laid out. So the judge—in fact, this is a reported case, it's called Fisher v. Stellenbosch Divisional Council. I think it's a 1980 or so decision, but it's a reported case. The judge, Judge Diemont, ordered that the Stellenbosch Divisional Council inspectors re-erect the shack. Hey, that was quite fascinating! I said, "Wow! Can the law try to come to the aid of the poor in this way?" And it did. So there they were, and, having shown this massive force, having to re-erect a shack they had demolished without following the procedures. It was quite a spectacle to watch these bullies being tamed like that, in front of the very people whom they had humiliated.

Q: Wasn't Judge Diemont under political pressure not to do that?

MGOQI: Well, there were judges who were fairly state-inclined. But Judge Diemont, to his credit, I must say, was one of those liberal judges of the time. And even now, he is regarded in the struggle circles as one of the judges who was not state-inclined. For his independent mindedness, the impartiality and strong sense of justice—acting without fear or favour and all of that.

Q: So the system had different tendencies.

MGOQI: Judges like him and judges like Goldstone—Goldstone goes a long way. I remember in 1977 he made a decision, also related to the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, that the owner of the property may not evict without providing alternate accommodation. That was quite a radical decision at that time. Such independent-minded judges, at the time, rekindled one's confidence and interest in the law.

Of course, we were in '85 then, I had to go and do articles. In fact, most black students struggled to get a placement in law firms. I was in a very unique position in that I knew, and I was known by senior partners in two firms. One was Richard Rosenthal. The other one was Michael Richman at Mallinick, Ress, Richmond, and Closenberg. Rosenthal at the time was with Syfret Godlonton-Fuller Moore Inc. Richard was a senior partner at that firm. And Michael Richmond was with Mallinick, Ress, Richman, and Closenberg. So I had to choose between these two companies and I fell for—I chose Richard's law firm.

Q: The Rosenthal one?

MGOQI: The Rosenthal one. So Richard was my principal for two years, 1986 and 1987. And the beginning of '88 I was admitted as an Attorney of the High Court of South Africa, led by Dullah Omar, who was an Advocate at the time. It was also during this period that Richard Rosenthal introduced me to the Panel of the Rhodes Scholarships, to which I was appointed. What I enjoyed most during my tenure on that Panel was to interact with the brightest minds in the nation, who were competing for the limited number of scholarships each year, to go to Oxford University, in the United Kingdom.

Q: Admitted to the bar?

MGOQI: To the sidebar. Admitted as an Attorney. And then I went back to the Legal Resources Centre as an admitted attorney, to practice public interest law.

Q: OK, so you achieved the objective that you'd had percolating for many years. And it finally happened.

MGOQI: It finally happened, in 1988. When I worked with LRC, I practiced there public interest law, mainly labor law at the time. The new labor dispensation had just come in so we were inundated with a lot of labor cases, unfair dismissals, retrenchments, victimization of trade unionists and evictions.

Q: Who was your employer at that time?

MGOQI: The Legal Resources Centre, the LRC. The LRC was public interest law in the sense that it was paying lawyers' salaries. Lawyers were on a salaried sort of basis, so they did not have to charge their clients fees, but we didn't just take every client that came through the door. But those clients who would have a matter that, if successfully defended in a court of law, would have a wide impact, yes. As a matter of fact the Legal Resources Centre also had Trusts in the United Kingdom and in the United States, whose main task was to raise funds from sympathetic donors to support the cause of social justice, through the work of the Legal Resources Centre.

Q: So almost like a class action?

MGOQI: Like a class action sort of approach, yes.

Q: Which, I understand, did not exist at that time, but now it's being…

MGOQI: Yes. So we're taking a lot of those cases including, of course, eviction cases, because remember, the motive behind most cases was racially-motivated. I remember that in 1988 I, for example, represented a group of people who were in the same area, Kraaifontein, where I had worked. One of the sad incidents—I don't even like relating it, because it disturbs me—but part of these raids by the inspectors, one of the women who come to visit the husbands, and the husbands come out of the hostel to this temporary structure. The women would act as a group, and they would shout when they see the inspectors coming. "KUBOMVU"," meaning, "It's RED, DANGER, RUN!" So they would run deep into the bush, so that the inspectors would not catch them —because when they got arrested, their husbands would have to pay and the husbands moan about having to waste money in this way and all of that. It caused unnecessary stress and tension in the families, who were already struggling to make ends meet.

Now, this one woman was pregnant, eight months pregnant already. And in the course of that raid, she stumbled upon a tree trunk and she died and the child died as well. I mean,

this man, when he was relating this to me, a very sort of ordinary rural, illiterate man, he was saying, "How do you compensate someone who has lost his wife in these circumstances? For just a piece of paper they could not produce?" A piece of paper that says that she is entitled to be with her spouse, and she dies under those circumstances?. It was so disturbing. And that's how he lost his wife. He said in effect no one can ever compensate you for certain losses, especially one like this one, where your unborn child dies with her mother. There was sorrow written all over his face that still haunts me till this day, when I think about that day and that incident, man's cruelty to man. Injustice! One writer, Reginald Heber Smith says: "Nothing rankles more in the heart than a brooding sense of injustice. Illness we can put up with, but injustice makes us want to pull things down".

Q: And the child. The unborn child.

MGOQI: Yes. Those days are just painful at times too painful to contemplate.

Q: Horrible, and yet you found a way to act in those circumstances, instead of giving up.

MGOQI: Yes, I did. And so, that hurt us all. This is now in the same area. I'm representing these people in the Kraaifontein area who are also subjected to harassment because this area was on the land that belonged to another farmer in that area, and these people are very niggardly, so they would come and raid them and arrest them and take their belongings. We would go to court and apply that they would follow procedures. these things.

This one afternoon, I was on duty at the Legal Resources Centre, a delegation came saying that their houses had been demolished and they didn't get any prior notice of this and what can you do? I asked a friend of mine who was in the nearby office, where I did my articles, to make a search as to whether the person who was doing the demolishing of these houses was the owner of the land. It transpired that it was not the owner. So we went to the High Court on an urgent basis, to ask the court to stop the eviction on the basis that the person who was effecting the eviction was not the owner, and technically, in the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, only the owners have the power to effect an eviction.

Q: An owner would evict someone on what basis?

MGOQI: Well, on the basis that they are there unlawfully and also, was the intention of the Goldstone decision, again. Goldstone had said that even an owner could not do that unless there was an alternative accommodation. So also, on that basis, and on the basis that there was no due notice given. They just went in and did the eviction.

Of course, it transpired that, then, we got the interdict stopping them. By then, of course, that was just a procedural victory. That could be made hollow by them following the procedure the following day. It transpired that the person who was representing them is a lady who was in my final class at UCT. Very decent lady. She was saying to me, "Oh,

what a pity they did! To have to oppose you on a human rights matter like this, and I love this, what do we do?" I said, "Well, I know that the merits are against us, but we don't have an alternative place to go to at the moment, so at the very most, give us time. Give us three months. In the meantime, we will look for a place to go."

Q: So this was settled out of court.

MGOQI: Yes, it was settled out of court, yes. Then she prevailed upon the owner to give us three months. This was '89 now. Three months, six months, nine months. In 1990, the provincial government here decides that they were going to expropriate the land from the farmer because he was not using it and he was not using the farm, anyway. It was a farm that was lying fallow.

Q: This is the one doing the eviction?

MGOQI: Yes, the one who had appointed an agent to do the eviction. So then the government expropriated the land, compensated the owner, and they said they were going to declare this area an authorized informal settlement. A formal informal settlement, as it were.

Q: A formal informal settlement? Amazing.

MGOQI: Yes. That is now an authorized sort of informal settlement. And they were going to put in roads, infrastructure, water, sewage and even electricity was supplied by the electricity distributor, ESKOM.

Q: Unauthorized living area.

MGOQI: It was now an authorized living area, yes.

Q: Who came up with such a perverse notion?

MGOQI: We don't know, but for us, it gave a reprieve to our clients, because to our clients, it meant that they could now no longer be looking for any other place. They were going to have services put in there. Roads, water, electricity. The area was called Uitkyk. It became the first area, in a sense, where that happened, in 1990.

Q: In 1990?

MGOQI: In 1990. It was just after Madiba (Nelson Mandela) was RELEASED.

Q: February 11. He had been released.

MGOQI: Madiba was released in February 1990. This happened around about August. I think everybody wanted to appear to be doing good.

Q: They wanted to appear to be doing good. They knew in which direction the wind was blowing.

MGOQI: Things were moving, yes. So the area then became organized in formal settlements, Uitkyk. And I stayed with them throughout the period of their tribulation.

Q: Was your case part of the reason that that happened? Your own case, which was settled out of court, was this part of the element that…

MGOQI: Yes. I think they realized, also, that we were not going to take it lying down. The LRC was known in this area to be very much pro-poor sort of litigious in orientation and in practice. We litigated a lot for poor people, having their back in that, getting funding from some other resources in South Africa, and in the U.S. They got a lot of support, in fact, from the U.S and the United Kingdom.

Q: Yes. And it's still here, still around.

MGOQI: Still there, yes. They had a foundation there. I had stayed with them from 1988 to about that time in '92. I got a letter from the provincial government saying, "We are pleased to inform you that the National Places Names Board has approved an application by the residents of Uitkyk to have this place named after you. It is now going to be known as Wallacedene. So this was such a huge recognition for me, to have a place renamed after me.

Q: In fact, a city named after you.

MGOQI: Yes. We started representing about 50 families. There's now something like a population there of about 250,000 today. Wallacedene. That used to be Uitkyk in the Kraaifontein area. So it was such a great honor, and the women apparently campaigned for this were behind this, and they didn't inform me about it at all. I only learned of it when the letter came that the AREA was now going to be known as WALLACEDENE.

Q: In '92?

MGOQI: In '92.

Q: Congratulations.

MGOQI: Yes, thank you. So in a sense the sacrifice of the years was being rewarded, getting that kind of recognition. It was '93; in fact, I got another fellowship to attend an international training program at Harvard, which was put up by USAID (United States Agency for International Development). And I was there for about two months.

Q: The Kennedy School?

MGOQI: The school of urban design at Harvard. But strangely, we were accommodated

at the law faculty residence, and I did most of my visits to the law faculty than I did to the offices, yes.

Q: Oh, OK. Also in '92?

MGOQI: No, '93. In 1992 I received training in community conflict mediation, conducted by Rick Salem of the U.S.A, and was subsequently admitted to the Community Conflict Mediation Panel of the Independent Mediation Service of S.A.(IMSSA).

Q: So another U.S. government grant that took you at a critical moment in your professional development. You had just had a city named after you, and off you went to Harvard for two months.

MGOQI: Yes, I went off to Harvard. And also, I met a lot of professionals who were involved in urban development.

Q: This is a worldwide program, or was it mainly Americans in that summer program?

MGOQI: It was mainly Americans.

Q: OK, so USAID sent you to a program that was basically made for…

MGOQI: Because it was a yearly program that brought together people who were involved in urban development in the U.S., and this time it was mainly people who were working around the state of Massachusetts, mainly people around Boston, Cambridge, and all of that, who were involved in urban sort of projects. Urban development projects, yes.

Q: Huge problems in Boston with the relocation of people.

MGOQI: Yes. That was…

Q: I'm sure they took you to Columbia Point.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: Which was a disaster, it's a disaster.

MGOQI: Yes, they took us to a number of projects to see. And also, they introduced people, the actual development practitioners across the professions, which was quite, really…

Q: Now, this was extremely relevant to what you were doing.

MGOQI: Exactly, it was.

Q: So you came back—my gosh, you came back taking up the same activities as before?

MGOQI: I came back, yes. I did. I took sabbatical leave and I went to Rome for six months to…

Q: Rome? Ah, the Latin language, there we go.

MGOQI: But strangely, this was an international school, it was called the International Development Law Institute. That was run and started by American lawyers. American lawyers who incorporated other lawyers from Africa, and other lawyers in Europe.

Q: In Rome.

MGOQI: Right, in Rome, in Italy. I was there for six months. They were doing courses like Legal Advising, Negotiating Contracts- Agreements, Drafting Legal Documents, Legal planning and design, Monitoring performance of obligations, Settlement of Disputes. In the substantive area of International Development Law Practice, the preceding skills were practiced in the following context: International Contracting and Procurement, International Commercial and Development financing, Privatization and Investment, and Technology Transfer. The Course Instructors were Lawyers from the International Development Law Institute and practitioners from a wide range of countries, who were experts in their respective fields. The course was sponsored by the FORD FOUNDATION over a period of six months.

Q: Arbitrage?

MGOQI: Arbitration, yes. Contracting, and all of that. All of those things. It was fascinating stuff. And there, also, were lawyers mainly from Africa, but also lawyers from Europe. Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic, people from South America, lawyers from South America, as well. Mexico, and all of those countries. Brazil. So there were quite a number, I think about 50 lawyers or so were thrown together there.

Q: They chose well.

MGOQI: But these were American lawyers, it was their initiative, who saw the need. I don't know why it has been useful throughout my legal career.

Q: You call this a sabbatical, but it sounds like hard work.

MGOQI: No, it was a lot of hard work. And in fact, by that time, I was also given a fellowship to go to Harvard to do some work there, I think for another six months. But what happened when I was in Rome, I had a gout attack and clearly it was so painful that I said, "I'm sorry, I cannot go to any other country. I am going back home." In '94, when the elections took place, we were not here. We went to vote in the South African embassy in Rome. I remember, people like former Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongo Ndungane

and other luminaries. So I came back in ’94. Of course, immediately as I came back, I was appointed to be a commissioner for administering the three townships, Langa, Nyanga, and Guguletu.

Q: What was the exact title? Commissioner…Anyway, to administer the three townships.

MGOQI: The three townships of Langa, Nyanga, Guguletu, together with KTC, Crossroads, Philippi and Khayelitsha, which now fell under the jurisdiction of Ikapa Town Council, of which I became an Administrator.

Q: These were the three original ones.

MGOQI: Three original ones, yes.

Q: Who appointed you to do this?

MGOQI: The minister for local government. That happened to be, at the time, Peter Marais. And as that assignment ended in ’94, there was a nomination beginning in ’95, for the appointment of commissioners for the Land Restitution Commission. However, before this unfolded, in November, 1994 I visited Human Rights organizations in New York, Washington, D.C and Baltimore, Maryland, for a period of two weeks, sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

Q: Land Restitution Commission?

MGOQI: Yes, in fact the act was called the Restitution of Land Rights Act. So the commission was the Land Restitution Commission, and I was appointed to…

Q: The other LRC?

MGOQI: The other LRC, yes. I was then appointed to be the commissioner for the Western Cape and Northern Cape, and also a deputy to the national commissioner. And I stayed in that capacity for four years, from ’95 to the end of 1998.

Q: That’s when I was in Pretoria.

MGOQI: Is that so?

Q: Yes, at the same time.

MGOQI: And then at the end of 1998 I was elevated to become the National Commissioner of the Land Restitution Commission. Again, I served another four years. So I served a total of eight years, and then I had to be relocated to Pretoria. I was in Pretoria from the beginning of ’99, until the beginning of 2003.

Q: Now there’s a culture shock.

MGOQI: Yes, it was.

Q: People from the Cape sometimes don't like to go to Pretoria.

MGOQI: It definitely was, yes.

Q: Although, at that point Pretoria was not the ultra-reactionary bastion that it had been. It was a city changing.

MGOQI: It was definitely a city in flux. It was embracing. It was growing in every direction, north, south, east and west, there were developments sprouting all over, changing the face of Pretoria into a modern metropolitan city.

Q: So at that point you became part of the national government.

MGOQI: Yes. I had access to the president and cabinet ministers; we would invite them for celebrations when we settled a claim, celebrating the event. We'd invite the president, and the deputy president. I saw Mandela, for example; we invited him when we were returning land in the Eastern Cape to the area where the late Chris Hani came from.

Q: When is the movie going to be made? This is an enormous story.

MGOQI: Yes, Thabo Mbeki, he also, when he was still deputy president at the time. He got out to the Kalahari Gemsbok Park, now the Kgalagadi, combining South Africa and Botswana Nature Game Reserves and we had a landmark settlement there, the return of land to the Khoisan, the indigenous people of this land.

Q: The bushmen, so-called.

MGOQI: Yes, we invited Thabo. He was the deputy president then.

Q: Was that your initiative, return of land to the Khoi people?

MGOQI: Yes, I was involved. The very first case of land restitution was settled by me in this country. When history books are written, it must be recorded.

Q: We're doing that right now.

MGOQI: It must be recorded.

Q: When was that?

MGOQI: In 1996. August. A case called Elandskloof. It's in an area called Citrusdal, in the West Coast. Beautiful piece of land. It is surrounded by mountains, with three streams of water flowing from the top to meet in the middle of the land, with an orchard, with

every fruit tree you can think of. But today, sadly, after so many years of toil, sweat and tears, principally because of internal conflict in the community that has been allowed to run amok, there has been no development. In fact the land has deteriorated greatly, since it was returned to its original owners.

Q: And given to its original owners.

MGOQI: Original owners who had been…

Q: Now, I take it that the original owners did not have title in the European sense, but they had ownership in a legal sense.

MGOQI: Yes. In a legal sense. The farmer when he…

Q: It transcended the papers.

MGOQI: Yes. We negotiated with the farmer; that, if he gave the land back, he would become a citizen of the state, and the first settlement was for R4m. Anyway, that farm was one of four farms that he had, or his father had, which he passed on to him. So he could really dispense with the fourth farm. And people had been dispossessed through racial dispensation. The land had been in the hands of the church, sadly. Again, the Dutch Reform Church, which was collaborating with the state in those days. Even in issues of dispossession, with land. There is still a huge debt the church as an institution has to pay for its role of collaborating and colluding with the Apartheid state. There is also much that could have been done by the current Government in its handling of the restitution process. The Truth and Reconciliation Process was very important, sadly the land restitution process was handled differently. It did not give the victims of dispossession the opportunity to come forward and tell their stories publicly, in a cathartic way and help them wash the burdens of those years of tribulation, which have continued to haunt them and held them back, each time they tried to move forward. What could be lying behind the failure of many communities who received their land back, not being able to use it productively, profitably and sustainably? Could it be that the baggage of the past is weighing them down? This is a story that still needs to be told.

Q: And here you are back in Cape Town.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: What happened between? You stayed four years as commissioner in Pretoria, is that right?

MGOQI: Yes, that is the second time. Four years…

Q: Oh, I see.

MGOQI: Four years in Cape Town looking after two provinces, Western Cape and

Northern Cape, and another four years looking after the country as a whole. So after 2003, the beginning of 2003.I moved back home, Cape Town.

Q: Then what brought you back to Cape Town?

MGOQI: I was told that I was being appointed as the city manager of Cape Town, which was, in a sense, for me, coming back home. And interestingly, in a city where I had originally been forcibly removed from one of its suburbs, at Goodwood. And I was now coming to administer it as a whole—coming full circle.

Q: Who appointed you?

MGOQI: The African National Congress, at the time, was the governing party.

Q: So it was an appointment that came from the ruling party?

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: This is an amazing irony. There's no word for this. It's a circle.

MGOQI: A circle, yes.

Q: A city you were not permitted to live in, and you later became the commissioner of that city.

MGOQI: Yes, it's always been, it's been a fairly rich life. And of course, to run it…

Q: It sounds like an understatement, an enormous understatement.

MGOQI: I think for the work of using the law as an instrument of justice, of social justice, I received the first recognition, apart from the community recognition in 2002. The University of Cape Town, my alma mater, conferred upon me the Doctor of Laws degree, an LLD, again, for using the law as an instrument of justice.

Q: Is that what the citation said?

MGOQI: The citation said it, yes. For helping communities using the law as an instrument of justice. And then in 2004, the Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape also gave me a similar Doctor of Laws degree, as well.

Q: So in effect, the Doctor in Law that law students get, but in your case it was an honorary degree?

MGOQI: An honorary degree, yes. LLD. (Honoris causa) (for the sake of honor). And strangely, in that same year, in May, I received correspondence with the Queen's School of Law at New York University, also to confer a similar degree. So I had to go over

again, to receive yet another honour, a Doctor of Laws degree, accompanied by my lovely wife, Dolly.

Q: Bringing the United States back into the picture.

MGOQI: Yes.

Q: Well, it's our privilege to have had your visits.

MGOQI: And of course, the final one was that in 2004, I think, as well—no, I'm still in Pretoria, sorry. I think in 2002 the General Council of the Bar of South Africa—you know, it's got ten bars—the General Council of the Bar of South Africa administers a very prestigious award named after one of the leading jurists in this country, Sydney Kentridge, who was knighted in the U.K., so he's now Sir Sydney Kentridge. The award is called the Lady Felicia and Sir Sydney Kentridge Award. At the time it was received by the first chief justice and the second chief justice. The first chief justice was Ismail Mahomed. The second chief justice was Arthur Chaskalson. And I became the third recipient of that award. Of course, I think there are now about nine or ten recipients, including Judge Goldstone, Judge Johan Kriegler, and others who have since been recipients of the same award.

Q: This would have been 2004?

MGOQI: This was 2002.

Q: All of this happened in the same year.

MGOQI: No. 2002 was UCT.

Q: Queens?

MGOQI: No, Queens and Walter Sisulu University were in 2004. In 2004, I also had the rare honour of being nominated by the SA Human Rights Commission, Gender Equality Commission, and the Independent Electoral Commission, to receive the Duma Nokwe Human Rights Award, after the first African Advocate to have been admitted as an Advocate in the High Court in South Africa.

Q: So now you're collecting awards. But I'm guessing that this.

MGOQI: I'm over that now. Bob Buford, who writes the book Halftime and Finishing Well talks about preparation time, success phase, followed by significance phase, doing work of significance, and phase of surrender, when one says God here I commend my life to you, I have done all you asked me to do to the best of my ability. I am now at the phase of doing work of significance. Building a legacy, so that future generations may be inspired to take our effort to higher levels of human endeavour.

Q: No surrender so far.

MGOQI: Doing things that I think that will leave a legacy, is a rare privilege. Having the opportunity to tell your story, is an even greater privilege, the envy of lions. As they say if lions were able to tell their own stories, their heroic deeds would not be claimed by hunters. To be able to tell your own story is no matter I take lightly. I think we can leave it there. Exactly two, hey?

Q: Dr. Wallace Mgoqi, it's been a great pleasure. It's been a great honor.

MGOQI: A great pleasure. It's a great honor. Thank you so much.

End of interview