

Constance Mogorosi

LRC Oral History Project

28<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Int This is an interview with Connie Mogorosi and it's Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2008. Connie, on behalf of SALS Foundation, Washington DC, we really appreciate you taking the time, and I know you have a very demanding job, so we do appreciate you taking the time to actually speak with us, and to participate in the LRC Oral History Project. I wondered whether we could start the interview if you could talk about your early childhood memories, what was it like growing up in South Africa under apartheid and where do you think your sense of social justice and injustice developed?

CM Ok. I grew up in a rural area called Smitsdrift.

Int Smitsdrift?

CM Smitsdrift.

Int Smitsdrift.

CM Yes, it's the other side of Kimberley.

Int Ok.

CM Yes, I...my parents took me there to my grandmother; I was two, at the age of two, ja. I was brought up by my grandmother, it was a very, very rural area because we schooled in a church. It was a church during the week...I mean, it was a school during the week and a church over the weekend. And we had shops where you would travel about three hours to the shop, three hours back home, and those shops were owned by white people and there were items that you'd buy, as a black person, and items that you wouldn't buy, as a black person.

Int You couldn't?

CM You couldn't buy, ya.

Int Like, for example?

CM They wouldn't sell you butter, you can't eat butter, you are black, they...you wouldn't buy white sugar, and you were allowed to buy bread flour, not cake flour, ja. And sweets, there were a type of sweets that were bought by us, as blacks, ja. But me, having parents from...working in Johannesburg, we had some time where they would send us, you know, luxuries I would say, nice sweets, nice groceries. My father had a connection in Kimberley that had a shop, so he would make a list of the grocery that should be sent to my grandmother in Smitsdrift. When you are in Kimberley,

Smitsdrift is about an hour's drive from Kimberley to Smitsdrift, so, that grocery would come by bus and we would get someone with a donkey cart to go and fetch it from the bus stop, and then my grandmother would pay a certain fee to that person. Then normally it would be cake flour, mealie meal, corn and raw mealies, a bag of sugar, tins of coffee, you know, and a couple of packets of sweets, you know, nice things that they knew we would love.

Int Sure.

CM Ja. And as we were growing up with my brother, but he's passed away...I mean, we were growing then, if our clothes...I mean, we'd outgrow our clothes, my...like shoes. My grandmother would take a thread (*laughs*), measure our feet and then write to my father: the children have outgrown their shoes, and this...and then she would wrap mine in a small paper and then write my name outside, and then wrap my brother also in a small paper, write his name outside, put in an envelope...You know it would take time, I mean, by the time they sent, maybe we've grown...

Int Bigger. Gosh!

CM (*laughs*) Then it would always have to be a size bigger than what they have received from my grandmother, ja.

Int Connie, when you were growing up and you were staying with your grandmother, did you ever ask yourself, or asked your granny or your mother and father why they couldn't...you couldn't live with them?

CM No, it wasn't the question of not living with them, was my grandmother stayed alone, ja, so my father thought maybe if he takes us to her, she will have company. But it was a difficult kind of setup because if you are sick, there's no clinic, there's no hospital. The nearest town was another place called Douglas, or Kimberley. It's either we'd...I'd be taken to Douglas or to Kimberley, but depending on the severe [*sic*] of your...what you're suffering from, ja. Then my grandmother would always prefer Kimberley because at least she knew that my father would maybe travel to Kimberley quickly, maybe to come and see what is wrong. If it's something that she can attend to, she would attend to. Like, I grew up suffering from tonsils, but the way she treated tonsils, she would grab me, and hold me tight, get someone to hold my feet and make me open my mouth wide, and come with a clean white cloth, something that has not been used, and clean my throat there at the back, and imagine how would I be screaming, ja.

Int At what point did you become aware of apartheid and the fact that black people couldn't buy things, they couldn't go certain places, when did you start developing an idea of this?

CM Well, when I grew up, like my father...they used to come home in December and we travelled to Jo'burg in June, June holidays, and then December they would come home. And then that year, I can't remember which year was it, my father was...and my mum, they were travelling from Smitsdrift to Kimberley, because that's where they would catch their train to Jo'burg. So when they were standing at the bus stop, my dad was with one of his aunts, she was old, and there's this white man who came and pushed her. And then my father said: can't you say sorry, you've pushed an elderly person? And then he said to my dad: she's an 'apie'. Which means: she's an ape. And then my father hit him.

Int Gosh!

CM And he was arrested for that. And when he got to court, he relate his story of what happened because he had lost his front tooth, that white guy, and...I can't remember how much fine he was fined, but he...there was a certain fine that he had to pay.

Int But he didn't spend time in jail?

CM No, he didn't spend time in jail, but it was terrible for him, because he says...I mean, the way he pushed the old lady, he could have just said: I'm sorry.

Int Yes...

CM Ja. But he couldn't say he was sorry, he just say: ja, she's an ape. Mm.

Int Gosh! So, you started hearing these things...

CM Yes.

Int ...did you also hear about the Pass Laws and that people couldn't live in certain areas, they couldn't move without a pass?

CM Ja. When I got to Jo'burg...I only got to Jo'burg when I came to high school, so...

Int So you did high school in Johannesburg?

CM I did high school in Johannesburg. So with me coming from Smitsdrift, it was difficult for me to get into Jo'burg high schools. We were living in Orlando East. I qualified to go to Orlando High School, but I couldn't go to Orlando High School because some questions that were asked to check if I grew up in Johannesburg, so there were questions that I couldn't answer, because obviously I didn't grow up in Jo'burg, so I failed. And then my dad went to Pimville, the school where I had to use train to go to. He went to Pimville and found the principal there, he was...he says he

was quite a friendly man, and he spoke to him and said: I have a daughter who's from a place like this and he cannot...she cannot get any entry in one of the high schools around, can you please help me? And then this principal said: no, you can bring her. And then that's where I did my high school education until I finished, ja.

Int So what period did you finish high school, what time?

CM I finished high school in 1969.

Int Right, ok. So after that, what did you do?

CM I went for a secretarial course, at...there was a school in Fordsburg called Wits...what was it...ja...Witwatersrand School of Commerce, so I did my secretarial course there for a year, and then I started working.

Int Mm. What did you do?

CM I've always worked as a switchboard operator and sometimes in a typing pool, or do them both, type and do switchboard.

Int So at what point did you then come to the LRC, 1991? 1990?

CM 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1991.

Int 1991. So by that time the LRC had been established for more than ten years, and it also had done a lot of key cases, etc, the Hoek Street Clinic had opened and closed, Pinky Madlala was here. How did you come to hear about the Legal Resources Centre, had you known about it before?

CM I knew about it but not much. It wasn't a place that really...I didn't know much about it, I just knew there was Legal Resources Centre, it helped people, but I've never come for any case that I would maybe ask them to help me with.

Int Sure.

CM How I came to know about it, I worked with Cecilie's (Palmer) friend called Auntie...Auntie B...Auntie Beatrice. I worked with her at Sizwe Medical Services, then...in fact I was working part-time there. And then she said to me: seeing that you're looking for work, go to Legal Resources Centre, ask for Cecilie (Palmer), they are looking for a receptionist there. I didn't even know that it's Cecilie (Palmer) that I knew, because I'd worked with Cecilie (Palmer) at SACHED Trust...

Int Alright, ok.

CM Yes. I worked with Cecilie (Palmer) and her mum...

Int Ma Vesta Smith

CM Ja, at SACHED Trust. But it had been years that I hadn't seen them. So I came to Legal Resources Centre, here comes Cecilie (Palmer), she didn't recognise me because the last time I saw her I was still small, young, then there I was, I had two children, quite big, so she didn't recognise me. So I kept quiet, then I went in for an interview, it was Cecilie (Palmer), it was Mahomed Navsa, it was Mahendra Chetty, it was Trevor Bailey, and myself, and they interviewed me, ooh, was it tough.

Int Really?

CM Ja. I went through the interview and then they said: ok, 'phone us tomorrow. So: oh, I'm not getting the job, they still say I must 'phone tomorrow, I don't think they are going to give me the job. Well, during the interview they said to me they needed someone matured and maybe, according to my age, I would qualify for the job, but they're not saying they will give me the job. Then I said: right, ok. Then I left, I 'phoned the next day, and they said: when can you start? Ooh! I said: tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. That was the last day of July. Then I said: can I start tomorrow. Then I came on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, I started working. And then my first week here was terrible.

Int Really?

CM Ja. There was a lady called Christina Landsberg. We were still in Pritchard Street, the office...my reception was on the fourth floor and the National Office was...where...eighth floor, ja. So apparently, Christina's husband 'phoned, you know, I was still learning, the switchboard got busy, maybe I made her husband hold...held...hold for some time and he put the 'phone down, and when Christina got home he gave her whatever story about me that I wasn't efficient enough, blah, blah, blah, blah. She came in the next day, huh, with clients at reception, she told me how inefficient I was, her husband 'phoned, I didn't attend to the call properly, you know, she said all sorts of things. I was upset. I asked myself, I thought these people, I mean, this place is for human rights, and I'm not expecting white people to be behaving like this, I thought she would call me and tell me, you know, aside, Connie, I know you are learning, but this is what happened. But with her voice on top of...she said all sorts of things. So the director then I think...ja, was Geoff Budlender. So I went and told Geoff that I...I don't think I'll work here, this is what Christina did. So he said: ah, ok, Connie I'll call her so that she can apologise. And then we were called, both of us, we went into Geoff's office...just as Geoff started explaining why he called us, she stormed out of the office, she left us there. And then really, Geoff calmed me down, he said: no, this is...don't think everybody's like this here, I can see you are very upset, this is not how we work, well, I don't know what's wrong with her, but I would like to apologise. Then I said: ok, ok, Geoff, it's ok, then I'll keep an eye on her, I can see I'm not the best person on her list. Ok, I continued working, Ma Vesta Smith

taught me and then I got used to...to...And then she retired and left me. (*Laughs.*) But she really taught me...

Int Ma Vesta Smith?

CM Ja. She taught me, I understood everything that she taught me, ok. And then we were not talking to each other...

Int Who...Christina Landsberg?

CM Me and Christina. My daughter attended school at Houghton Primary School. One day when she came back from school, she came with some young girls of her age, only to find that it's Christina's children. And then she went straight to Christina's office with her children, and then children being children: ah, this is Zanele and then: Ah, Zanele, who are you? No, my mum works here. Who's your mum? She says: Connie. And then I think she felt bad. She came down with the children: Oh, I'm sorry Connie, I see your child goes to school...That's the first time she started talking to me, ja.

Int Gosh! Quite an eventful start. (*Laughs.*)

CM Ja. I never thought I could work for so long.

Int But you have. What kept you going?

CM Well, I think, kind of, you get used to the place and I think one more thing is...I like what I'm doing...

Int Really?

CM Ja. I don't know, I think maybe it's the upbringing, I feel for people, Roxsana. I like listening to people, helping if I can, advising if I can, so that's the kind of person I am, that's what kept me here.

Int Tell me a little bit about the kind of work you do, for example if someone comes through the door, Connie, because you're not only doing that, you're also answering the telephone as well. Tell me about the process, because you've been here seventeen years, has that process changed?

CM I can say it has changed because we used to have a reception full of clients, then we were doing labour cases, that's where we used to have a lot of people, I think people are suffering out there, ja. We used to have lots and lots of labour cases people, but since...I think since the CCMA opened or even before, I don't know what...what made

Legal Resources Centre not to take unfair dismissal matters because we can still deal with the pension fund, blue cards, we can still do, but if it's unfair dismissal, they don't take it.

Int You mean the LRC doesn't take it?

CM The LRC.

Int Has it ever taken it before, did it stop at some point?

CM It stopped at some point, but I'm not clear about the reasons why.

Int Sure, sure.

CM I don't know whether it's because of the CCMA, because CCMA strictly does...

Int Labour.

CM ...Labour, unfair dismissals, ja. But if it involves Provident Fund, or Pension Fund or the Unemployment Insurance Fund, we...Legal Resources helps.

Int So when you started Geoff Budlender was the Director, wasn't he?

CM Mm, mm.

Int And then Geoff Budlender left and Arthur Chaskalson also left from the National Office?

CM Mm.

Int And then it was what...Bongani...was it Bongani after that?

**Inaudible**

CM No, it was...After that there was a lady called...hey...my memory is running away with me...Shehnaz...

Int Shehnaz Meer.

CM Ja, it used to be Shehnaz Meer, and at one point it was Odette Geldenhuys...

- Int      Then you were with Bongani?
- CM      Bongani Majola...ja. I don't know if I remember them...
- Int      Correctly in order.
- CM      ...correctly in order, but...
- Int      Right, well, fair enough.
- CM      ...those are some of the people that were Regional...I mean, National Directors.
- Int      Mm, and you've always worked in the National Office?
- CM      No, I was in the Regional Office...
- Int      You were in the Regional Office when Odette came...?
- CM      I worked with...maybe it was Mahomed Navsa, I worked with Moray Hathorn, I worked with Ellem Francis, those were the Regional Directors that I worked with.
- Int      Mm, mm. What were your experiences with different people, was it easy, was it difficult, was it...?
- CM      With clients?
- Int      With the different directors, because each director has a different way of doing things, so I'm wondering what your experiences were?
- CM      Um, Mahomed (Navsa), he's a straightforward person, doesn't take nonsense, but he's a very nice person also. He has two sides, nice and...
- Int      Straight.
- CM      ...ja, if he's angry, he's angry. And then Moray (Hathorn) was a workaholic, ja. He would somehow get confused with his cases, with reception, because if I don't understand something or I have a difficult client, I have to call an attorney or the director, please come help, I have a problem here. Ja. Then they'll sort the client out because I sometimes have difficult clients. Ja. So if I have a difficult client, to avoid exchanging words, I have to call, maybe an attorney or the director, if one of them is available to come and put the client into place. And then Ellem (Francis) also



was...how can I put it? He liked...he would talk to you...let's say...no, let me say, I come to work, I'm not feeling well. I say to him: Ellem, I'm not feeling well, I need to go to the doctor. And then he'd say: ok, you can go. And then...I'm just making an example, he'd go to Topsy (McKenzie), do you think she's sick? Do you think she wants to go somewhere or she's just making up a story? He was that kind of a person.

Int Mm.

CM Ja. But on the other hand, he was very strict, I mean, like, when I observed him with candidate attorneys, people that went through or that worked with him, they would always say: ay, ja, we learnt a lot, ja.

Int Interesting, ja. And so, after that...at the moment, who is the Regional Director?

CM It's Achmed (Mayet)

Int And what are your experiences of working with him?

CM Ag, how can I put it? He...he's not man enough, I'm sorry to say that, but if you are a leader...if you're a leader, people must look up to you, ja, they must...there are things that people must learn from you. He's also the type of person that can never face you and say: I don't like this, I like this. He'll always...he also goes behind your back.

Int So now the National Office and the Regional Office are in one building, how does that affect you, Connie?

CM No, it doesn't really affect me, because I...since they moved here they've been on the sixth floor, and I've been on the seventh floor, and then...I'm used to answering both the switchboards.

Int Right.

CM Ja. Because with Esme (Wardle) running around, most of the time she's not at her desk, so I have to pick up all the calls. So I think I'm used to it, it hasn't changed anything so far.

Int Sure, sure. I'm also wondering, Connie, at some point in your interview you said to me that the reception used to be full of people. Why are people not coming any more and where are they going?

CM No. People still come.

Int They still come?

CM Ja. Let me say a person comes here with a criminal case like rape or murder, I refer such clients to Legal Aid Board. And then a person comes with a divorce matter, I refer them to Wits Law Clinic. And then if it's a labour case, it's either the CCMA, or the Wits Law Clinic, but the client must go there on a Wednesday if it's a labour case. And then...some of the cases that are not that serious, you know, I refer them to the Black Sash, ja, because Black Sash is an advice place, advice office. Ja. There are places that I sometimes refer, like people with ID problems, I refer them to the Black Sash.

Int I'm just wondering from your perspective, given that you're on the front lines, when someone comes in and then you have to refer them and it's a matter that you feel, oh, you know, you...that person's so desperate. Do you ever worry about...?

CM I worry a lot. When Sis Pinky (Madlala) was still alive, there used to be cases where I would feel this person really could have had help from us. But, you know, how people can be, no, we don't deal with that matter...oh, no, I'm busy, refer this client to wherever. I mean, let me just make an example. There's a...one lady that once came here, she had a problem with an estate agent, she sold her house and this man, I think, he was not giving her the right amount for the house. And then, the person that saw the client referred the client to Consumer Court, I mean really, I'm not dumb, that dumb, but I knew that, uh uh, this person can still get help from this office, and then I said, like: what happened? Oh, they said I must go to Consumer Court. And I said: just sit down. And then I went to Sis Pinky. Sis Pinky, this client has been referred to Consumer Court, but here is the case and she said: bring the client in. You know, it was just a question of a 'phone call, Roxsana.

Int Mm, absolutely.

CM Ja. A telephone call, ja. But it solved everything.

Int From what I can understand almost ninety-five percent of people you see are referred away, is that true?

CM Yes, I would say yes.

Int But that wasn't always the case before?

CM No, it wasn't the case before.

Int So what's changed?

CM What has changed, Roxsana? I don't know if the people that are working now, don't have...how can I put it...a heart, or sympathy. Because people that come here are poor

people, sometimes the person would come here with borrowed money, but if the client is referred away, or a client is told: no, it's late, come tomorrow. Where will the client get the money to come back?

Int Mm.

CM Ja.

Int So when you send people away, do you send them to ProBono.org, for example?

CM I normally first find out, Roxsana, I 'phone first. Because if the person comes here, he's been referred from somewhere, I feel bad to say: no, we can't help you here, I don't know where to send you. I normally make a call, and then if they say they cannot help us, I ask from the office here, here's a client, the client is from the Legal Aid Board or the client is from Wits, here's the case, where can I refer the client to? I normally don't just send the client away, especially if the client has been referred from another organisation, I always feel bad.

Int Sure. Connie, your job is a very high-pressure job because you have to be at your desk, if you're not there, someone might give the wrong information?

CM Ja.

Int Do you and the paralegals and the...whoever is, like, reserved for you, so if you're not there that person takes over, do you meet and discuss your strategies, what the criteria are for clients, how to approach, or is this something that you each do individually?

CM We don't meet. I can just say this is what I learnt from Ma Vesta (Smith).

Int Right.

CM Ja. Like I said to you, if it's something that I don't understand or I'm not sure of, I speak to the person on duty, or whoever is available, because the client is right here. I need to tell the client the right thing.

Int Sure, sure.

CM Ja. It's not a question of meeting because people come with different cases every day. Some of the cases are something that was never dealt with here, so if I'm not sure, I always ask. I don't just send the person away without making sure.

Int I suppose what I asked about meeting, I don't mean for every client, but I mean like more generally, do you meet maybe once a month or something, and talk about the

types of cases you've had, some of the difficulties and do you all talk to each other? Because I think the work you do is very much on the level of a paralegal?

CM No, I'm never involved in such meetings.

Int So you don't meet with the paralegals? But what's your relationship, working relationship, with the paralegals, like Josephine Mokwebo...?

CM No, it's ok, it's ok, though she's a bit moody, ja. She is moody sometimes, even her clients are scared of her, I'm sorry to say that, but her clients, when they come here, if they didn't 'phone for an appointment, I tell you, she bites their heads off. Ja. So sometimes the client would walk in: I didn't make an appointment with Josephine, can you please give me the card so that I can 'phone? I said: sit down. Josephine, so and so is here, she says she didn't make an appointment, can you see her, or see him? If she's in a good mood she'll say: ok, she can come in. If she's in a bad mood: no, tell her to come when, when, when, such and such a time. Ja. She is like that.

Int You know, everyone talks a lot about Sis Pinky Madlala were you...I think Mr Zimmerman had left by the time you arrived so...

CM Mm. No, no, no, Mr Zim, I mean, when I got here, well, I didn't get to work with him for a long time but I did work with him.

Int Could you talk a bit about him?

CM He was...I think he was the type of person that I could also talk to when I had a problem at the reception area. I would just phone him: Mr Zim, I have a client here, here is the problem, can you come and help? Then really, he would leave what he was doing, come to reception, and explain to the client, ja. If the client was difficult but at least he would listen...the client would listen to him. Let me just tell you a little story of what happened...

Int Sure, sure.

CM There was a couple that once came, we were in Pritchard Street, it was a white couple, and then, it was...it was quite late, so...they were Afrikaans-speaking, so I think, looking at me, they just thought I wouldn't tell them what to do. They explained to me their story, and then I explained to them how we work around here, and it is late for me to put their names down, maybe they should come back tomorrow, so that they can have a proper consultation. I mean, if you come here at four o'clock, how long is it going to take for you to consult, lay your story to get a proper advice? And then this woman started swearing at me, calling me a 'kaffir', all that, who do I think I am, what, what. She was screaming at the top of her voice, and there were clients sitting there. And they said to me...you know, I kept quiet, Roxsana, I mean, my type of work that I do, I must always...

Int Be calm.

CM Ja. There were clients sitting there, and they said to me: can we beat her up for you? (*Laughter*.) And then I said: ay, whatever, I'm not interested, I'm still trying to fight what's in here. These ladies they just went...they were still standing by the lift with the boyfriend, or the husband, they just went to her, they started hitting her, and she screamed. Mahomed (Navsa), and all of the people...what was that lawyer again, um, Mr Abrahams, you know, they all came out of the offices. These girls were just hitting this woman. And then: Connie what's wrong? They say: hey, she's swearing at this lady at reception, does she think this a rubbish...she's...(*Laughter*). I mean she's trying to be nice to her, she's swearing, we don't like the way she was swearing at her, she's even calling her a 'kaffir', and who does she think...ja that's why we're beating her. (*Laughter*).

Int Gosh! That was quite a scene, I'm sure.

CM I'm telling you it was quite a scene. They said: ja, we don't like people like this, I mean, obviously you were so nice to us, you know, you are so polite, how can a person just come and talk to you like that, we'll show her. (*Laughter*). But, you know, it was quite a scene. And then when they explained to Mahomed (Navsa) and the other people, well, they understood and said: oh, well, but you shouldn't have hit her. They said: no, she was swearing at her, we're teaching her a lesson.

Int Gosh!

CM (*Laughs*) Ja.

Int So Connie, have you ever thought of doing paralegal training, have you...because it seems that you have...you do that work anyway?

CM Well, I do it in a way, I would say I'm doing it, in a way. But...even if I had that thought or that thought crossed my mind, Roxsana, I'm two years away from retiring, so...

Int George Bizos is eighty.

CM (*Laughs*) But do you think they would let...they would still let me work if I'm...I turn sixty and I still carry on working...it depends.

Int Mm.

- CM Ja. It has crossed my mind but I said: oh, well, a few more years to go, then I'll be retiring.
- Int How is the LRC different now, from when you joined?
- CM The difference I would say is the...you know, when people come and go, come and go, if you start getting used to a person, it's time to leave, come new people...
- Int Sure, sure.
- CM Ya. So I don't know how to put it, but it's not settled like before, because from time to time it's new faces, ja.
- Int I'm also wondering, funding is a huge issue, it's always been an issue, but post '94 it's become a bigger concern, particularly for the LRC, some people say that it's very difficult to get good quality black lawyers, because they are snapped up by the corporate law firms, especially good lawyers, is that...do you notice that that's the experience of the LRC, that they can't attract...?
- CM Ya, because most of the lawyers when they leave here, they go for greener pastures, I mean, the Thami's (Mbatha) have gone...Thami (Mbatha) has gone to SARS, Mandla (Mkatshwa) went to SASOL, John went to TOTAL...
- Int John who?
- CM John Mulaudzi, but he's now with...I don't know what that company's called, but it's where the old stock exchange used to be, he's running a BEE thing there. But I think the main thing is because of the salary, ja. People...I mean, lawyers leave because they want to earn more.
- Int Mm.
- CM Ja.
- Int Race is always going to be an issue in a lot of organisations in South Africa...
- CM Mm.
- Int What are some of the racial issues and the gender issues in a place like the LRC, what are some of the things that you feel are important?

CM Well, race and gender, I don't know if I've noticed anything regarding that, or maybe is it because I'm always glued up to what I'm doing, you know? But with me, I wouldn't say I have come across that, something that I would say, yes, it is like that.

Int One the things is that, for example, in your line of work I'm sure you've noticed this, now the Wits Law Clinic does very good work, and it does a lot of work, there's CCMA, there's ProBono.org, and also the places like Webber Wentzel, Bowman, they're all doing pro bono work, are you concerned for the future of the LRC?

CM Ja, I am. Well, my concern is the funding, if LRC will go through until whenever. Like, I mean, there's a time where we couldn't even get increase, we only got increase this year, which is the fourth year, because there were no funds. But what I'm asking myself is, are they going to get enough funds to keep on funding the LRC, ja.

Int Connie, you've worked with a lot of people, I'm wondering who's been one of the people that you've most enjoyed working with?

CM Um...well, one of them it's...I would say it's Sis Pinky (Madlala), I'm not saying because she's no longer around, but really. You know, Sis Pinky would help me with any type of client that couldn't get help here. More especially like I said to you, if it's a question of a telephone call, you should call the client in and just make a call, and the client goes out smiling. And there was once a client, this man had gone to jail for rape, and he did not rape that woman. When he explained to Sis Pinky, he said he found the girlfriend with another man and she ran quickly to the police and laid a charge of rape, and he went to jail for...I don't know, for something like fifteen years or something...ja, within those years. And when he came back...

Int You mean after the fifteen years?

CM Ja.

Int Gosh!

CM He came back, and this woman refused him to see the child that they had when he went to jail, and then that's where he went crazy. I don't know where he met Moray but he was referred by Moray (Hathorn) to Sis Pinky (Madlala). Then when he explained the story he said to Sis Pinky: I think I must go and kill that woman, kill the child, and kill myself. You know, it took Sis Pinky about an hour, talking to that man behind closed doors, trying to explain to him how to take worthy of his life, he'll go back to jail, you know? When he went out of there he was all smiles, you know? Ja.

Int Gosh! Connie, I've asked you a range of questions, I'm wondering whether I've neglected to ask you something, which you think I should...,it should really be in your LRC Oral History interview?

- CM I don't know, what do you think? What do you think? (*Laughs*).
- Int Have I left anything out?
- CM Um, well, what I can just say, even if you're not asking it...
- Int Sure, sure.
- CM ...it's just a personal thing...
- Int Absolutely!
- CM ...it's a personal thing. What I can say is I have been here, like I say, next month...on...I mean on Friday, it will be seventeen years, but I'm a bit concerned with what I'm earning, I'm not talking politics, but you said one has to be honest. I mean, I'm hardly earning what...I'm hardly earning ten thousand, Roxsana...Ja.
- Int Mm. You mean a year?
- CM No, a month...monthly, ja, I mean with all the deductions, I'm left with nothing. But I can't complain, as I said to you, I love what I'm doing, sometimes I even forget myself, ja, I love what I'm doing. But it's just that, you know, I wish the directors would appreciate us, come increase time they shouldn't just make it a round figure, they should look at the value of the people that have been around, what you're doing, you know? Ja, they shouldn't just make it a round figure.
- Int Sure. The other thing I wanted to ask you is that, if I had to ask you and look back on your seventeen years here, is there a particular memory of a person, be it a lawyer, or someone you worked with, or a client, that you really treasure, that you really feel that this was a very important experience in your life?
- CM Who...I can't think who...I have worked with so many people...
- Int Of course, I'm sure you have many memories.
- CM Ja. There's Lavery Modise, well, you know, it was here at work, he was quite a nice person, you know, naturally...
- Int Sure.
- CM Ja. And that once he was my neighbour, like I say, I live at Showela Flats, he was living in one of the flats, and then my daughter then was at...where...she went to a



girls' school, she was at Parktown Girls, I remember the story very well. Her transport didn't fetch her that morning, and then...I didn't have money to give her for taxi, public transport, because I'd already paid the...the kombi that fetches her every morning, and I 'phone Lavery (Modise). I said: I will hope he's not gone. And then he was still home, Lavery please come to my rescue, here's the child, she has to go to school, the transport didn't come, what do I do? And he said: ok, I'll come and fetch her. And then he came, he took her to school. And then when he came back he says: oh, your daughter...When they got to school Lavery just thought he should just drop her at the gates, no, no, no, no, you come with me and explain to them why I'm late. He had to go inside...*(Laughter)*.

Int That's lovely. *(Laughter)*.

CM Ja, Lavery says he took her in, explained to the principal, this is the story, I'm just a neighbour and the mother's colleague, I brought her to school. Ok. Ja. And even here at work really, if it's something that really needed a lawyer, he wouldn't say: I'm not on duty, why don't you talk to the person...No, he would come or say: send the client. Ja. And Mandla also, Mandla Mkatshwa, he was always being helpful also, I mean, those are the people that, even today, they still 'phone me.

Int Mm.

CM Ja, that's Lavery, that's Mandla Mkatshwa, and Webster, ja.

Int All very nice people.

CM Very nice people. And the other day I spoke to one of them out of the blue, but I tell you they're always nice to me, that was Ajax Baholo. I can mention a lot of people, and one of the Trustees, Mlambo...

Int Dunstan.

CM Dunstan, ja. They've always been nice to me.

Int That's lovely. Well, Connie, I have really enjoyed interviewing you and thank you so much, it's been a long time, but I'm glad we finally had the opportunity to...

CM Ja.

Int Thank you.

CM I enjoyed talking to you also.

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