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### **INTERVIEW WITH FT MALOKO THEBENE**

**DM:** Ok we're on now we are recording, can you please tell us your full name and what is your role in this community?

**FT:** My name is FT Maloko Thebene, I live here in Maandagshoek, I am working at Modikwa at a contract called Local Mining.

**DM:** Ok, before we ask you about your job in Local Mining we are just going to ask you a few questions about your past. Were you born here in this community and when were you born?

**FT:** I was born here in Maandagshoek in 1970/02/02.

**DM:** Have you lived here all your life?

**FT:** Yes.

**DM:** Have lived anywhere else in South Africa, worked, have you travelled to other places?

**FT:** No.

**DM:** So you've always been here all the time ... so when was your first job, when did you start working, and how far in school did you go?

**FT:** I started to work in 2004 here at the mine, a Local Mine contract here at Modikwa. It was a Masojana contract. Even now I'm still working with them.

**DM:** Ok, so how did you make a living after growing up as a young man?

**FT:** I was living a lovely life because I was self-employed, I would go and cut wood in the mountains and come back to sell it to the community. Then the changes came when the mines came in 2000. That's when I started to look for a job in the mine leaving my other job; I was living a lovely life before.

**DM:** Can you explain a little bit about when he created the job by cutting down wood, and selling it to people ... did he make a decent living, maybe in the 80's and 90's?

**FT:** I was selling it here at home and to neighbours, it was a bit better than now when I'm working.

**DM:** What I wanted to know is what kind of income he was making from that job?

**FT:** In profit I could make about R 1,200 a month if I had cut enough wood.

**DM:** And you were doing all this throughout the 1990's, this is what you were doing before you got employment?

**FT:** Yes.

**DM:** What we also want to find out from yourself is do you remember those early years when the political changes started to happen in the early 1990's? How did you feel as someone who was working for themselves, who was self-employed, how did you feel about the changes that were going to happen after 1994. Just as an individual how did he feel?

**FT:** I was hoping at that time when Patrice and his guys were coming out here, I was hoping for a better life, that everyone would get the opportunity of employment.

**DM:** Ok, I wasn't asking necessarily asking what happened when Patrice and the mine came, but when April 1994 came, when the political changes came, the possibilities of better things happening at that point?

**FT:** I had the belief that having the freedom, we were going to have a better life, we are going to be able to go close to town, things like electricity was going to be available, water, just a better life.

**DM:** At the time did you support the new government, did you like the fact that Mandela was elected as president and that ANC was coming into power?

**FT:** Yes I was very happy after the first elections.

**DM:** And by that time did you have a family, were you married, did you have children by then?

**FT:** No.

**DM:** So you were a single man.

**FT:** Yes.

**DM:** So what were you hoping to do for yourself from the collecting of wood ... what were you hoping as an individual, as a young man to do for yourself with that job?

**FT:** I had hoped to have a big business at that time.

**DM:** What type of business did you want to start?

**FT:** The business that I really loved was a tuck shop, and to also grow my wood business.

**DM:** Why was that not able to happen? You had the idea, after '94 ... why was it not able to happen?

**FT:** I started to change my mind when the mine came.

**DM:** Are you still single or do you now I have a wife and children?

**FT:** Yes now I have a wife and children.

**DM:** When did you get married and when did you have your first child?

**FT:** I got married in 2000, and our first child came in 2002.

**DM:** Normally when people start to get married and they have children, they start to think that the future is going to be better and they are going to have more income, so

when you started to work at the mines did you have hopes that you would now be able to provide for you family better and for your child?

**FT:** I also thought that there was going to be changes to my children because I was going to get a job at the mines, and the work would provide enough for us to even have houses, where we can live with our children, and they can go to school.

**DM:** So how did you come about to build this place which is yours now, just from the earnings that you made, is this your own creation, you did it yourself?

**FT:** No it was because of the money of my previous business which I had put away. When mines came I knew that people would want to rent out rooms so I took the money I had budgeted and built this house.

**DM:** Now when did you first decide to get a job at the mine?

**FT:** I got the job in June 2003.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit about how you went about trying to get that job?

**FT:** I was sitting here at home, when I started thinking about standing in line too. When I got there I found that Masojana was hiring. Then they said they want 22 people - they send ten to Masojana and the remaining twelve to Bapedi Shaft.

**DM:** So he was just chosen from the gate? So tell us what happened after that, after you were chosen, what happened in terms of job training, how did you understand who you were working for?

**FT:** When I was hired, I did not know that I was being hired by the Local Mining of the community, I thought I was just being hired by the mine. After that we were taken to the clinic where we all passed, then they told us that we were going to work for Bapedi Shaft but the contract that we were going to work at is Masojana, then we started working there, I worked for three months. After three months the people I worked with on the mine liked my skills and they told me that they wanted to take me to the mine for training so that I can get a certificate.

**DM:** What would be interesting to find out is, when you went there and you were offered the job and they said that you were going to do this and you weren't aware that it was on contract, was there anyone in the community that was explaining what the options were in terms of who you should be working for and what your rights are as a new worker?

**FT:** Yes there were people who told us how we were going to work .. it's people from Section 21 from Masojana.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** Did they say to you that these are the conditions of your employment, did they explain what rights you have as a worker?

**FT:** No they did not explain all of those to us, they just told us where we were going to start working.

**DM:** Ok so when you had just started working were you earning the same amount that you are earning now?

**FT:** At the time I was still a labourer I was earning R1,125; the R25 was for the UIF which means I was left with R1,100. I worked for a year and then I asked them to take me for training so I could get the certificate for a winch operator, then they took it up a little bit to R1,600, and it's remained like that till now.

**AV:** Do you know about the Basic Conditions of Employment Act?  
**FT:** Yes I do because we joined the Union, and the Union did explain.

**DM:** When did you join the Union?  
**FT:** When we started the mine had the Union, so I joined when I started working.

**DM:** Do you pay dues? Do they take money from your pay cheque to pay for the membership of the Union?  
**FT:** They deduct it.

**DM:** Are they still deducting it?  
**FT:** Yes.

**AV:** Can you describe some of the conditions you are working under ... how many hours? ... where do you work in the mine, and maybe some of the problems that make your job difficult?  
**FT:** Where I work we work eight hours, they is no lunch underground.

**DM:** Eight hour shift with no lunch?  
**FT:** When you are sick, you have to take yourself to the doctor with your own money, the contract has no medical. When we work we work in Mada Site, where there are cracks.

**DM:** Is it safe to work underground?  
**FT:** It's safe because we were taught to work safely, but it's not safe in a sense of if you're not careful anything can happen.

**DM:** Since you've worked in the mine, have you been a part of or witnessed any accident that has happened?  
**FT:** No I have never seen any.

**DM:** Since working have you experienced medical illnesses such as breathing, and other problems at all?  
**FT:** The illness that we get is like flu, because the air we breathe in there is not like outside, and because we are working at Madala Site they is a lot of air there.

**AV:** Initially you were running your own business, what made you go and look for a job, instead of selling wood?  
**FT:** It's because I thought more people we going to be employed and life was going to change, less people were going to depend on wood because of electricity, so I took the job as a security.

**DM:** You were expecting for things to improve by you going to work in the mine ... have they improved?  
**FT:** No, life has not improved, it's gone low.

**DM:** Maybe explain to us a little bit what are the problems that you're facing that you hoped the job would change?

**FT:** I earn little money, and the money that I earn does not manage to do what I had hoped to do, actually the money that I earn is R1,100, from there it's used for groceries not to improve my life. It's what makes me not to improve.

**DM:** Earlier you said that you earn R1,600 and now you say R1,100 ... is the R500 deduction or what?

**FT:** After getting the R1,600, deductions for UIF, NUM and the bus I am left with R1, 400.

**DM:** Ok now in the work place you work with many other workers there, are all of you contract workers or are some full time workers ... which ones are contract and which ones are full time?

**FT:** The full time workers are the ones firstly hired by the mines from Rustenburg and taken for the training but most of us who live here work as contract workers.

**DM:** Is there is a difference in pay?

**FT:** Yes there is a lot too because their money is great, it's high and ours is low. They also have a medical.

**DM:** Do you have an idea of how much, I mean instead of R1, 600 is it R2, 000, R2, 500, what is it per month?

**FT:** They get R3, 800 and the other day when they came back from the strike I heard that they got an increase to R4, 500.

**DM:** Tell us a little bit about the strike, when the strike happened, as a contract worker how were you involved in that strike?

**FT:** We also got a letter of strike from the CCMA. It happened that while we were on strike because we were working for Local Mining, the CCMA came to us and told us that they have suspended our strike and that we must go back to work. The thing that they wanted was a letter that states how much does the mine pay the contract workers, and then after they had received the letter they told us that they would not be able to increase the money for the contract worker because a lot of people are working as contracts.

**DM:** So essentially what you're saying is that the Union was telling you that if you are a Section 21 worker you must not be working?

**FT:** In other words they said we must just keep on working without an increase because there are a lot of people to pay, like the Masojana, Tsidintsi (the traditional leaders), and Buntu and there is no money which could come to us the (contract) workers.

**DM:** What I was asking is ... that you joined the Union right from the beginning of working and expect the Union to protect you ... how do you feel about what happened during the strike?

**FT:** We were greatly disappointed to the point that we wanted to leave the Union but because of the way they ended up telling us that they tried but failed ... we just ended up taking it like it is.

**DM:** Apart from the strike are there any other benefits from being a member of Union?

**FT:** No, nothing.

**DM:** Why are you still a member of NUM?

**FT:** When you fight if you don't have the weapons you can't win the fight, maybe one day something will happen.

**AV:** What can you tell us as an employee, you are a worker under the Section 21 company, what do you know about the Section 21 company, yourself?

**FT:** I can't tell you anything about the Section 21 because since the Section 21 started, it's working for the white people; all I know is that I'm working for the Section 21.

**AV:** When people come and say that Section 21 is the community company to empower the community, what do you think of that generally?

**FT:** I thought the Section 21 was here to empower the people, but it has done nothing. We even hope God helps us so that Section 21 can end so that things can be better for the work place and for the community.

**DM:** So you as a mine worker would you prefer to be employed by the mine directly?

**FT:** Yes I would be very happy if the mine hired me because even now I have job certificates.

**DM:** At any time that you've been at the mine have you ever been visited by any member of the Department of Labour or anyone from the government to come and look at the situation or explain certain things about workers rights?

**FT:** When members of the government come to the mine they report to the management of the mine, then the management of the mine comes to us to let us know that the members of the government are going to come on a certain day. They tell us workers to fix everything so that when they come they find everything in place. But to us they never get ... they only talk to the management of the mine.

**AV:** I just want to ask you another question. You've said that you're not really benefiting from working for the Section 21 and you said that the community does not benefit from the Section 21, so who does benefit from the Section 21?

**FT:** Those who are benefiting from the Section 21 are those who were elected by the community ... it's Phineus Ngwana and Pudinjana who were elected with the directors.

**DM:** Have the workers... ever gone and talked to them as the workers in this company?

**FT:** Yes we have spoken to them but the response we got from Phineus Ngwana was it's still a bit early for the workers to be asking for something from them, and that they will tell when the time comes for an increase.

**DM:** You said earlier on that you are just working for the whites ... this mine is supposed to be owned by Anglo American and half by A.R.M which is a black owned company ...are you saying that all of the people in the mine the bases, the shift

managers are mostly white and you don't see any of that back economic empowerment and ownership?

**FT:** It's a mixture of both black and white because Section 21 of Masojana can also mine in the mine.

**DM:** Who do you think is running that mine?

**FT:** The one who is controlling the mines is Nicky James.

**DM:** Is he from Anglo American?

**FT:** Yes I'm not sure but I could say that because he's the manager in the mine.

**DM:** This is now 2007, we are now fourteen years after 1994, you have freedom we have won after 1994. What you are telling me is that life has not changed in fact it's maybe even worse than it was before. How does that make you feel? We have a black government, we have freedom, we have all of these things but you live and you're working and all the things that you've told us about don't seem to be very positive ... so how does that make you feel about how things are moving?

**FT:** To be honest, when the black government came in a lot of things did change but when it comes to the mine there are no changes.

**DM:** Just to go on one more personal side ... that one thousand or however much you earn every month ... how is it that you spend that money, what is it that you spend that money on, when you budget?

**FT:** The R1,600 that I earn is not enough to fit my budget, before I earn I have debts, somewhere you find that I have taken a chicken on credit; I have borrowed R 10 from someone. Then I buy food for at home, I have to pay for societies and then I I'm left with R700 to go to town I pay R14 to load meal meal-meal we pay R30. It's tough ... I can't budget because before the end of the month the money is finished.

**AV:** On the money that you've borrowed from the community do you know what are the interest rates that they charge on the money that is borrowed?

**FT:** Yes there are interests on the money that I have borrowed. I remember where I work there used to be a bank arranged by our company that borrowed us money because we were earning very little. Every month after taking the payslip we go to the management to get it signed, and then we go to Deba Bank to borrow money. If it's R500, the repayment on that would be R625 at the end of the month.

**DM:** So what you're saying is that every month you're living on debt?

**FT:** Yes.

**DM:** We are just going to rap up now. So how do you think that things are going to change in your work, your hoping that one day the Union will do something ... is it just hope or do you think that the workers can do something to change the situation?

**FT:** To be honest I don't know, maybe it could happen that another representative could be elected by the community that could come and change what's happening in the mine, or we will just suffer with this Section 21.

**DM:** Can I ask a question ... for you, what do you want to change in terms of your work conditions?

**FT:** I wish they could be a Medical Aid so when someone is sick we can go to a doctor, and for the salary to increase so I can have a better life.

**DM:** Ok one last question, if you had as a worker in Maandagshoek now in this mine, if you were able to speak to the premier Sello Moloto or the president Thabo Mbeki or to the local mayor, what would you say to them as a worker in Maandagshoek?

**FT:** I would tell them that we need safety with work that we are doing because the law in the mine says so, but as time goes on they tell us that we do not use safety, we use sub-standard, when the people from the parliament or government come they tell us to use safety so that when they come they find the right standard and they mark us at that standard. After the visitors go they go back to the sub-standards.

**Emmanuel:** How do you feel from other people who you work with, to feel that things are going right for them?

**FT:** With the community and the leader pushing the mine to listen to them I see success in the future.

**DM:** Ok

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