

1 **KWAZULU-NATAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

2
3 **INTERVIEW WITH ARCHIBALD JACOB GUMEDE, CONDUCTED BY RUTH**
4 **LUNDIE IN APRIL (?) 1995.**

5
6 ('G' SHALL SIGNIFY THE INTERVIEWEE AND 'L' THE INTERVIEWER)

7
8 (The tape is very noisy to start with and Ruth Lundie comes in, suddenly, as follows:)

9 L: ...in Pinetown. Because of his extremely long history in the struggle against apartheid,
10 more than fifty years, the discussion is largely biographical. Archie's father, Joshia, was
11 a well-known public and political figure in Natal. In the 1890s he toured Europe with his
12 Zulu choir. In the 1920s, he was a strong figure in the ANC, becoming both Natal
13 President of the movement and National President.

14 (The tape is switched on and off and then restarts as follows:)

15 L: Do you think it is you?

16 G: Yes it is?

17 L: Yes it is? Shall I put the pause button on?

18 G: ...about as far as that goes???(Inaudible)

19 L: Mr Gumede, your father was a leading figure in Natal politics for more than thirty years.
20 How did you feel about growing up in such a distinguished and well-known family? Were
21 you aware of this?

22 G: No, I wouldn't say that I was aware - it's - to any extent. I just took things for granted
23 that everybody lived in the same sort of environment as I obviously did.

24 L: Oh, well, very nice too.

25 G: What it was like. Of course, I was aware that he was on trips, he was at Camperdown at
26 one time, well, near Camperdown he was, well when I was still very young, he left on that
27 trip to Europe, to England and he came back and he was - at Camperdown most of the
28 time. And later on of course, he got into the African National Congress in Natal when he
29 was elected, with the assistance of Chief Mini, and Dube did not take it kindly (Mini) at
30 all. He took it.....?

31 L: Yes

- 1 G: Well, apparently our Buthelezi is not different from Dube in this. They were the messiahs,
2 you know and Dube used to say 'you can only have one messiah, you can't have two.' In
3 the evidence, people think he's a messiah, while there is somebody to be treated with all
4 the restraint that he is ???
- 5 L: No, quite.
- 6 G: Now I will say that that, that was something. Then of course, one met people whom one
7 would otherwise not have met
- 8 L: Yes, certainly.
- 9 G: I met Selopethema.
- 10 L: Did you indeed, yes?
- 11 G: He was in 'Maritzburg to address meetings? And I think it was explaining information
12 with the delegation to England, to get ??
- 13 L: Do you see your own part in the struggle has been even longer than your father's, if I may
14 so.
- 15 G: Well.
- 16 L: Because you went to Fort Hare...
- 17 G: Yes...
- 18 L: ..and under influences there ...
- 19 G: Yes... Well, Lovedale... it was a student and because I recall that we were still at Lovedale
20 when we came in contact with that negro - Max Yegan? The ?? At Fort Hare ...
- 21 L: Yes.
- 22 G: Although later on he seemed to think that there was merit in the - in the policies that
23 were advocated by Doctor Verwoerd.
- 24 L: Did he indeed?
- 25 G: Yes, he...
- 26 L: Yes.
- 27 G: There was merit in them -
- 28 L: Did you ever meet ZK Matthews?
- 29 G: Oh yes. We were ??? He started - he started at Fort Hare.. I was still at Fort Hare.
- 30 L: Yes.
- 31 G: Ja..

- 1 G: It was a student there, well, it was - we were not people whom one would regard as
2 people to be met - we were just there and that ...
- 3 L: ...students?
- 4 G: And there he was a Professor, a lecturer and professor..
- 5 L: Mmm
- 6 G: ...Professor.
- 7 L: yes.
- 8 G: Mmm.
- 9 L: And in what year did you join the ANC?
- 10 G: Ah well, I joined the ANC round about '41, '42. I think it was '42.
- 11 L: Yes.
- 12 G: I think it was '42 and yes, ...
- 13 L: ... you would have been what? Mid twenties then?
- 14 G: Yea. ?? 20 - in '42?
- 15 L: 27, 28?
- 16 G: Ja, ja, jaLet's see ... in 1942, I was born in '14, so in '42 I was 20 something.
- 17 L: 28!
- 18 G: 19, ja round about there.
- 19 L: Because, you led the Natal delegation to the Kliptown Conference...
- 20 G: Yes...
- 21 L: ...when you were not very old.
- 22 G: Ja, ja. (They chuckle) ...I led that delegation, because other people who were in leadership
23 positions were under hannings?
- 24 L: I see...
- 25 G: Nyenga(?) was under ban.
- 26 L: Yes.
- 27 G: Dr Conco (?) was under ban...
- 28 L: Yes?
- 29 G: Chief Luthuli was ...
- 30 L: ...was under a ban...
- 31 G: So, being the assistant and secretary to Nyengwa ...

- 1 L: yes?
- 2 G: I was the more senior of the of the office bearers in ... of our branch ..
- 3 L: In Natal? Yes, yes.
- 4 G: In Natal.
- 5 L: Yes, yes.
- 6 G: In Natal. And of course, in 'Maritzburg I had been very much involved in gathering the
7 people's claims - you know we had that operation - which was to be used for - in drawing
8 the - the Freedom Charter.
- 9 L: Yes, yes.
- 10 G: In the campaigns going around the area...interviewing - I was only - a lot of people to
11 find out what sort of future they were anxious to see, what sort of improvements could be
12 made to their localities - and all the rest of that.
- 13 L: It's a remarkable document a - well, as a historical one.
- 14 G: Ja, it is, it is. Because this was not just done in 'Maritzburg. It was done all over the
15 country.
- 16 L: Yes.
- 17 G: And those, reports were submitted to the central committee in Johannesburg where they
18 used the material for drawing the Charter. Well, as far as I can say, it seemed the Charter
19 does contain much of what came from the grassroots people's ??? That was a real
20 grassroots account, there. The campaign.
- 21 L: I'm sure.
- 22 G: It went right through to the black society
- 23 L: By that time you had already joined, as well, the Liberal Party
- 24 G: Yes. You joined the Liberal Party. I joined the Liberal Party round about '54, I think.
25 When - it was not very long after it was formed.
- 26 L: Yes.
- 27 G: And there was a man, Amon Majola, who was a manager of the Pietermaritzburg Branch
28 of the Cooperative Society. They were operating their business at the Native Market,
29 Ematsheni, at the corner of Retief Street and Berg Street. And they also were operating
30 a restaurant, at the municipal premises of the Municipal Bantu Administration Offices
31 where Mr Stevens was the - the big shot. And that restaurant was a very convenient

- 1 meeting place for people who were interested in the finding of our future which would be,
2 uh, Well, ...
- 3 L: Not oppressed?
- 4 G: Ja.
- 5 L: Yes. You have strong 'Maritzburg connections.
- 6 G: Pardon?
- 7 L: You have strong 'Maritzburg connections.
- 8 G: Oh well, 'Maritzburg .
- 9 L: ...is your hometown.
- 10 G: ...that is my hometown. Ja, its my hometown, yes. So, you see when Mr Majola first
11 joined the Liberal Party. well, of course there was this sort of perception that these two
12 did not - the Congress, African National Congress and the Liberal Party were not
13 compatible with each other, but it was being mainly on the question of the franchise.
- 14 L: yes. I remember that.
- 15 G: In this Liberal Party at the time was advocating a franchise with limitations - and the
16 African National Congress was absolutely for a universal franchise.
- 17 L: Yes.
- 18 G: So, well, in a way there was some opposition in the Congress to people being in the
19 Liberal Party. But it happened in 'Maritzburg, that, well, the - in spite of that we did join
20 the Liberal Party. I think Msimang too, Selbe Msimang.
- 21 L: Your cousin?
- 22 G: ?? In the ANC. Yes, he had political connections with them. So, we just tried that - we
23 were more or less facing in the same direction...
- 24 L: Yes...
- 25 G: ...and we had, we were opposed to the same sort of forces that were opposed to us were
26 similar, so...
- 27 L: You had a similar affiliation, didn't you?
- 28 G: Yes...
- 29 L: ...with the NIC.
- 30 G: Oh well? (They speak at the same time)
- 31 L: You drew a lot of strength from the NIC.

- 1 G: Oh yes NIC really made 'Maritzburg, with a man like Dr Motala and others. That is how
2 we - the two of us came to be arrested in '56.
- 3 L: Well, I was going to ...
- 4 G: yes (he chuckles) .
- 5 L: It was not long after Kliptown when you were both arrested for the Treason Trial.
- 6 G: Ja, ja, that is so because the - it was Kliptown that sort of - uh, uh. brought together all
7 the forces that were opposed to apartheid in a sense, so that was the start - that was going
8 to be used for proving that this movement was directed at overthrowing the state through
9 violence.
- 10 L: yes...
- 11 G: Because the argument came in this way that the goals of the Freedom Charter could not
12 be achieved except through violence.
- 13 L: yes, yes, yes...
- 14 G: But of course - eventually I don't think that that is - anybody believes that. it was violence
15 that had brought about the changes that have taken place. More than other - coercive
16 forces that have. Well, of course we all accepted that a change would not come
17 spontaneously through the ...
- 18 L: White sector. .
- 19 G: White sector, we accepted that and we had to think of how was it going to be done. And
20 of course it did strike us that the only area where there was a possibility for pressure to be
21 applied, it was in the economy.
- 22 L: Yes
- 23 G: So, there were two areas in the economy that we've see about - capital coming in and
24 labour being supplied to produce the goods So. we then organised on those lines.
- 25 L: You gave the Isitwanandane to Father Huddleston...
- 26 G: Yes...
- 27 L: At Kliptown and he pursued sanctions for thirty years (Gumede is speaking at the same
28 time but it is (inaudible))
- 29 G: He, his courage, his courage gave - ?? - it was just good fortune that he should have been
30 taken to Sophiatown...
- 31 L: Yes...

- 1 G: ...and not have been placed in any other area in the country.
- 2 L: Yes.
- 3 G: But it was he who was chosen to be there because there he really met the - uh - uh -
4 should I say, the dynamic individuals of - of black society. Because in Sophiatown,
5 people who resided there were mainly people who were the owners of the properties on
6 which they lived, and of course they ran their businesses... ja. People who were there -
7 were there for business, to make a living.
- 8 L: Yes, yes
- 9 G: And in that climate, there were people like Dr Xuma,...
- 10 L: Yes
- 11 G: ... who was living in the area and leading people in the area - there were many others also.
12 Who were - you see, the townships, people were sort of restricted in allowing others to
13 come into the area, or leave the area - it was a permit. In Sophiatown you didn't have to
14 have a permit. So, many of the people who were active and were not just willing to submit
15 to authority in that sense, found their way to - to - to Sophiatown and found congenial
16 company. (Ruth laughs). Yes.
- 17 L: So you were released in 1957, I think, from the Trialists.
- 18 G: Yes, from the Trialists, yes.
- 19 L: But, you continued in your work because another peak event was the all in 'Maritzburg
20 Conference, in 1961, which was three or four years after that.
- 21 G: Ja, but of course, the problem really came with Sharpeville with that state of emergency -
22 that was Sharpeville.
- 23 L: Yes, yes.
- 24 G: And that also helped us because like these '56 trial. The '56 trial it brought together
25 people from throughout the Republic and they were able to get together, in fact for two
26 weeks at least during which time they were able to know and understand each other better
27 than they had been - ever been able in the past because meetings only took place at yearly
28 intervals, two or three days. You see, owing to influx control regulations. And we
29 couldn't have a conference at any time which was going to last for more than 72 hours.
30 Because that was the only time you were allowed to be in an urban area without a permit.
- 31 L: I'd forgotten that.

- 1 G: (He chuckles)
- 2 L: And the government was doing us a favour
- 3 G: Well, of course, we only met for that time. Then when they caught us in '56, they brought
- 4 us to gaol.
- 5 L: Yes.
- 6 G: Ja, we were able to be together then for more than that period (he chuckles) ... and work
- 7 out strategies and so forth. We were having people like Luthuli, Matthews, Mandela,
- 8 Nokwe. All sorts of people who were very much involved in the cause.
- 9 L: Yes, of course.
- 10 G: Yes. Now, in '60 that was down to the people, I say the Midlands main peoples
- 11 L: Yes.
- 12 G: ... the Durban people were all kept in the Durban Prison on the South Coast.
- 13 L: I see
- 14 G: That was when the people of this - Cato Manor staged a march to the Durban Prison,
- 15 to demand the release of Luthuli. It was then that a young man, Bhangwadeen, was able
- 16 to come up and defuse the situation by talking to the people that knew him and then in
- 17 going to the police. I think he knew some of the police because he was articled with Mr
- 18 Arnenstein, going to the police and saying 'now please, don't shoot.' Otherwise you
- 19 would have had the same thing in Durban happening as it happened in ...
- 20 L: Yes, yes. In Sharpeville.
- 21 G: ... Oh yes. The police were reeling, very much threatened
- 22 L: Was this the Bhangwadeen that was at that lunch in July?
- 23 G: yes.
- 24 L: That you and I were at?
- 25 G: Yes.
- 26 L: The same Bagwadeen?
- 27 G: The same Bagwadeen.
- 28 L: Ah, yes, yes. But then after that, '61, we had the all-in Conference in ?
- 29 G: We had the All-In Conference, when Mandela was - addressed the conference and ...
- 30 L: Yes..
- 31 G: There was a call for a three day - National Stayaway.

- 1 L: That's right, yes. And were you at the Natal Convention at all?
- 2 G: When?
- 3 L: In April - The 'Maritzburg all-in Conference was in March, I think and the Natal
4 Convention, at the University, was in April of '61.
- 5 G: I don't . . .
- 6 L: I don't think you were there.
- 7 G: No, I can't recall.
- 8 L: I don't think you were there, I don't think, I don't think (They are speaking at once). . . you
9 were there, but subsequent to that you really have suffered from bannings and
10 restrictions...
- 11 G: From, it was - '61 now, '61 was the what you call, was the all-in Convention...
- 12 L: Yes...
- 13 G: Then came the arresting, in Rivonia, of Mandela.
- 14 L: Yes?
- 15 G: in the - they were arrested in Durbar. And I was arrested in 'Maritzburg. It was under
16 the section, under the ... what do you call it - Suppression of Communism Act - this 90
17 days ..
- 18 L: Detention...
- 19 G: detention - for - to answer questions, ..
- 20 L: Yes...
- 21 G: . . . and of course because I didn't answer the questions, I would, I was kept there for 121
22 days.
- 23 L: Really, 121? Four months
- 24 G: Yes.
- 25 L: Yes, yes.
- 26 G: I was released, and that time then, of course. I was under a ban then.
- 27 L: Yes
- 28 G: ..which I had received in '63, that ban lasted until . . .
- 29 G: '68, it was a five year ban. '68. And now that was withdrawn that ?? confusion that was
30 making ...
- 31 L: No, no.

- 1 G: ?? I completed my course and was admitted and then I worked in Maritzburg, '60, '61 and
 2 some day I came down to Durban. I was doing well- I was more or less with people who -
 3 it was the people with whom I had been working in the past in Natal were either in exile
 4 or in prison or they were dead. And for a long, long time there was very little
- 5 L: Man.
- 6 G: There was so much suspicion about each other. I say each other, well, very few people
 7 were willing to be seen to be in the company of people who were - had been in detention
 8 and so forth...
- 9 L: People who were in the struggle...
- 10 G: Yes... People who were in the struggle.
- 11 L: But the control was so tight, Mr Gumede.
- 12 G: It was very tight.
- 13 L: It was only after Soweto.
- 14 G: Because you see more than anything else, and as far as Maritzburg was concerned, my -
 15 my continuing existence and I was very - made sure that I had been introduced to the
 16 Liberal Party at that particular point in time in that - well, there was this organisation that
 17 was formed by Peter Brown. The Defence and Aid - a Defense And they were able
 18 to assist my family when I was in prison in '60. And from '56 really. And as a matter of
 19 fact the ... even when I was article - because what I was earning was not sufficient to
 20 support the family...
- 21 L: No, no.
- 22 G: ... the assistance I got helped me to get through the course.
- 23 L: Of course.
- 24 G: Until I was admitted ... and I must say that the support that I got really enabled me to
 25 survive. Because what I am talking about is survival.
- 26 L: You are a survivor! But you went on fighting, because post the Soweto Uprising - things
 27 started to move and then there was this organisation called the UDF.
- 28 G: Yes..
- 29 L: ...in which you played a very important part. ...tell us more than once...
- 30 G: As far as that goes, we - it was - first of all had the local skirmishes of the bus fares and
 31 then there were skirmishes over rent, then there were skirmishes over the incorporation

1 of KwaZulu, and then there was this formation of the 'Release Mandela Committee'.
 2 Because we owed that to the Indian Congress because they were people who inherited
 3 what was once called as the Campaign for Clemency, Clemency Campaign - and then, now
 4 they came up with the 'Release Mandela Campaign' after that and the Indian Congress was
 5 mainly responsible for orchestrating that, providing venues for the - holding party political
 6 meetings. Because in the townships you couldn't go there..

7 L: No, no.

8 G: Church people were very particularly where ? All these ?? Involved in the politics...

9 L: And then you got paid the usual result - you were detained because of this.

10 G: I was detained and found ourselves

11 L: Yes, tell the story of the Consulate. (Gumede laughs).

12 G: We were presently detained under the Public Safety Act, we were taken to Section 28 of
 13 the Public Security Act. I was taken. Found myself in the company of old friends in the
 14 NIC Associates, they were people who were more involved with these school boycotts.
 15 The Indian schools had school boycotts and parents' committees were formed with
 16 education committees were formed. And then we had the - somehow the state got into
 17 a ?? Were creating a revolutionary climate (he chuckles). So, because of that we were
 18 taken in in order to find out what is this revolutionary climate - well, they got no answer.
 19 Fortunately the boys in Durbar were able to get the services of Mr Gordon who was QC
 20 SC, Senior Counsel and he argued the case that the arrest had not been lawful. So -
 21 because that had ben gazetted at the time of something and so, we were released, but we
 22 realised that this was not the end of the story and we decided that we decided that we were
 23 not going to expose ourselves to re-arrest so easily. And then after we had been
 24 underground for a few days, we felt, well, it is time that we might ? - we could expose
 25 ourselves in part - this had received as much publicity as had not been received in the
 26 original arrest. So we went to the Consulate, in the belief that we would be arrested. But
 27 fortunately the British Consulate General, in Durban, well, enabled us to get in touch with
 28 people like Father Huddleston and others, who then pulled strings so that we were
 29 expecting that we would be there for an hour or two ..

30 L: (Inaudible)

31 G: ..a bit longer the questions and now the request ... then of course you see there was

- 1 this problem with the government now, of them being involved. South Africa was on
 2 good terms with the British Government so we had to be careful how they handled the
 3 situation. They made it as uncomfortable as possible for us all so that we should leave, but
 4 - well, look at that now - we must get to the United Nations. Plans went out to the United
 5 Nations too - oh, that was a piece of cake?...
- 6 L: And how old were you at that time ...that would have been - what '85?
- 7 G: Ja, '85. ...so ..
- 8 L: You were over 70.
- 9 G: Ja. I was, ja I was .. ja - ja.
- 10 L: Yes, yes. You were over 70 so now you've got nearly 50 years ... behind you because in
 11 '88 you suffered restrictions, with Albertina Sisulu..
- 12 G: Yes. In '88/'89 - it was those restrictions but of course much milder than the others
 13 because ... these were mainly addressing and gatherings at which more than 8 people were
 14 present and also no interviews with the journalists. No entering premises where journalists
 15 were, so ???
- 16 L: That shows you had something worthwhile to say, doesn't it?
- 17 G: (He chuckles) ?? Well, of course I don't know why they ran so much ?? - the people who
 18 read newspapers are mainly the people who were interested in the status quo - this is ??
 19 I don't know why, but they were worried, of course that if people learned the truth about
 20 what we were after, then they may see that it was not in their interests to support the
 21 apartheid regime with all its outdated, out -I just don't see how people could have
 22 thought the way they did into this century is something that I can't believe still. You know
 23 we had that war where Hitler where, the Germans could, the sole rulers of the whole
 24 universe???
- 25 L: Yes...that's what they wanted.
- 26 G: People say - the British have been governing this empire where the sun di not set
- 27 L: You're right. But I'm glad the sun hasn't set on you yet, because ...
- 28 G: ...set - and Hitler said no - France, he just went into France and grabbed Poland and went
 29 all over the place and had to grab Russia. So he wanted the whole world. He failed. But
 30 these people can't make it succeed.
- 31 L: Yes. But you came our triumphantly .

1 G: No, well of course, yes..

2 L: ...on the 2nd of February, 1990... yes.

3 G: ?? Well, then it came through that, well, in the end, talking was better than fighting...(he
4 chuckles)

5 L: What was it like at Groote Schuur in May 1990?

6 G: Oh it was - well, we received very, very, uh, let's see - VIP treatment at ? We reported
7 at the old Chance Hotel ? In Somerset West and taken into Groote Schuur where the
8 Ministers had discussion with them. Supposing that they had made that because they were
9 in line with the Freedom Charter and there was nothing we could really say - we were
10 opposed to. This was an acceptance of what we thought ...

11 L: ...of what you had stood for all those years.

12

13 (The tape is switched off) ..

14

15 There is nothing else on the tape (first side). There is nothing taped on the second side.