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**“VOICES OF RESISTANCE”**

INTERVIEWEE: DR VANITHA CHETTY

INTERVIEWER: RAJES PILLAY

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RP: Good morning. This morning we are interviewing Dr Vanitha Chetty, and we bid you welcome.

VC: Thank you.

RP: She is the daughter of the late Dr K Goonam, who is a well-known activist in Durban. She was also one of the first Indian women to qualify as a doctor. To begin with, we would like just a brief background of you, yourself.

VC: Well, I was born in Durban, I'm not going to say how long ago. I married at a young age, much to my mother's disapproval, and I think everybody knew how she disapproved of that. I have two children, two daughters, one in England, and one here in Durban, and a granddaughter. I've spent most of my life in South Africa. I did spend a couple of years in England at a much younger age. In fact, my mother and all of us went in 1955. I've spent a couple of months in India. I was sent off to India, also at a young age, to study but I did come back after a few months. I've lived in Australia, but I've largely been in Durban. I studied whilst I was married, and I've been lecturing here at the University since 1987. So that's basically my life.

RP: Thank you. Could you give us a brief outline of Dr Goonam, your mother's background, you know, what, who were her parents, where did she come from? Grandparents, what were the...?

VC: Well she actually had a very interesting, or she had very interesting parents. And I think they must have been, I think they were ahead of their time, particularly her mother, and she's often said that, she said that over and over again, not only in her autobiography, but whenever she was interviewed. Her mother was from Mauritius, her father was from South India, and he came to South Africa as a young man, perhaps he was eighteen, nineteen when he came to South Africa. And he worked in Johannesburg for a while, and then I think he was introduced to his wife, they married he made his way to Durban and they started a family. Eventually, well not eventually, I think soon after his arrival in Durban, he went into import/export and as my mother used to tell the story, he was actually the one who was responsible for the planting of the palm trees on the Esplanade, and he had a flourishing business at that time. He did very well, but when my mother was studying in England, for some reason, something went wrong and he lost his fortune, and she was forced to work her way through university, the last couple of years that she was there. She herself had - they were four sisters including herself and three brothers, and that's basically her family. They did have a host of cousins and what have you, many of whom are still very much alive today. And that was her family tree.

RP: Just whereabouts in Durban was Dr Goonam resident?  
Central or?

VC: In her early days they lived in Central Durban, in the Leopold Street area, and after that, her father bought a farm in Umgeni, what is now known as Riverside. And the family was moved there, and I know she used to tell the story where it was such a treat for them on Sunday's because her father had what she called a landau, a horse and carriage. And they all used to pile into the carriage and go and visit the farm over weekends until they went to live there. So that's where she grew up and from there, it was from Umgeni that she went abroad to study.

RP: What motivated her to become a doctor? You know, how did it happen?

VC: I think, you know, people who know my mother will know that she was not the run-of-the-mill person. I think, you know, I suppose nowadays she would be called rebellious. She was also far ahead of her time and she had this personality - she wanted to escape, I think, the restrictions, at that time, the conventions. She had the ability, she had the potential, but and I also think that she was very much influenced by her mentor, who, at that time, was ML Sultan, that we know today. He was a family friend because they all lived in the centre of Durban. And she used to go, and she used to talk to him and tell him of her dreams and her desires to go abroad, and at that time, it was something unheard of. I mean, women didn't even go to Maritzburg alone, let alone go abroad. And so she did have this personality, she had the intellect, she had the desire, she had the mentor. But apart from ML Sultan, who

was her mentor, I think it was also her mother who played a very prominent role. And it was actually the mother who prevailed upon the father to send her abroad. And it just so happened, at that time, roundabout that time, I think, Monty Naicker was also, he had just gone, or he was about to go. And I think they thought, well it would be fairly safe to send her then with Monty, because in those days they were like family. They lived side by side, and they were one large family, and that's how she went.

RP: Can you expand a little on, you know, what her days in England were like, in the early days? What her student days were like?

VC: I think they were actually a mixture. They were very happy days for her because I think she really came into her own there, all this potential that she had, and all this yearning to do something different. She was actually able to do it there. By the same token, it was also very hard for her because, as I said, towards the end of her, well or in the middle of her studies, you know, she had to work her way through. And then, also being in a totally different culture, whereas in South Africa they had been brought up within the context of family and community. There was no such thing there, and then you must remember this was in the early 1930's when life was so different. And England on its own is a harsh country. Anyway, so if you put all these different factors together it must have been very, very - it must have been difficult for her. It was, but I think what her saving grace was when she went to Scotland was all these friends that she had there, many South Africans as I say, like Monty and Yusuf Dadoo. But she also, when she was

in Scotland, when she was in Edinburgh doing her medical training she had a landlady, Aunt Mary, and Aunt Mary, by all accounts was a wonderful woman who took in, not only my mother but the other students that she had with her, because in those days it was common to have students from abroad boarding with them. So she represented the mother figure, the father figure, and the family that my mother didn't have there in England, yes in England.

So as I say to recap Rajes, life was difficult to a certain extent but it was also very exciting because then they joined the book club and there were various activities and rallies and the intellectual company with which she was surrounded and which she thrived on. She absolutely thrived on that.

RP: Are you aware of any, you know, activities that she got involved in during her student days?

VC: Well, I don't know, I think you perhaps know then there were fermenting, if you like, plans I wouldn't say for liberating South Africa, at that stage, when we talk about the 1930's. But you know, at that stage, I think various pieces of legislation had come into being which were particularly pernicious as far as the Indian people were concerned. Like the Land Tenure Act and the Pegging Act, and things like that.

So I think there was a lot of debate, and lot of activity, that went on with regard to that. The political part of her life, that came later, on her return to South Africa. I think in those days, it was whatever interested students, at that time. That's what they, you know, they united against, and that's what they discussed, but as I say, I know that she was in the book club and that was, you know, interest or

caused a lot of debate and discussion, and just generally, what was happening not only in South Africa but in the world, at large. In England, at that time as well, because they were also heading towards the Second World War, then. So I think that's what claimed their time, and also studying, because let's not forget they were students. So they did have some work to do.

RP: In what year did she come back to South Africa?

VC: She returned in 1936.

RP: Ya, that would be just pre-war. What were the conditions she faced when she came back. You have a qualified Indian woman not, or ambiguously accepted by the community, will you tell us about that?

VC: Well you know, I have some articles that she had in her possession, where they were absolutely jubilant on her return because here was this young South African woman, she was thirty at the time when she returned. The first of her kind ever to be sent abroad, and to come back qualified as a professional and on top of that, she was a woman and that was absolutely unheard of. So there was jubilation, I mean she was fêted and feasted and hosted wherever.

Apparently, there was a huge reception that was held for her in Queen Street, the library in Queen Street in those days. And there was another one that was held for her in Pietermaritzburg, they hosted her there as well. So there was a lot of attention and a lot of media coverage that was given to her on her arrival back in South Africa. On one or two occasions when she was fêted and feasted she was exhorted by the people who were hosting her to make sure that she

upheld the values and the traditions of the community, and what have you. And of course, as we all know, she didn't do that. And so - no she was very well received, although after that she did face a bit of - I don't know if I would call it opposition, I think people were in awe of her, anyway. But because she was different, she wore dresses, she wore high-heel shoes, she wore lipstick, she had short hair, she smoked, she did not conform, basically. But they did accept her, no matter what their criticisms were, they accepted her because her heart was in the right place and she was there. She was a community person, she wasn't an individualist, I mean she was to a certain extent. Her personality was very individual, but she lived and worked for people quite unselfishly, I believe.

RP: I think I will ask you about her professional life what sort of circumstances attended her entry into the medical field?

VC: I'm not quite clear that I understand that question, Rajes.

RP: You know, I mean firstly she left the country because there was no opportunity, and then she came back from your account things exacerbated to worse stage sort of, as far as the blacks were concerned. Now you know, what sort of difficulties, or what sort of problems did she have to face in setting up practice or entry into the - ?

VC: I don't think, personally, that she did face really many difficulties, because she went into private practice. She set up on her own. Perhaps the difficulty was that people were a bit wary of going to a woman doctor initially, and especially a doctor, as I

said you know, with the high-heel shoes and driving around, and someone who was so different from the norm. As she tells it, or as she used to tell it, she had mainly white patients in those days, the lower class, working class whites, from the Greyville area. They used to support her and that's how the title of her book came about, "Coolie Doctor." Because apparently when she went on one of her house calls one of the children there opened the door and said: "oh mummy, the coolie doctor is here." And that's how that came about. So there was, I think, a bit of wariness initially, until she began establishing a reputation, and I'd say her clientele grew, you know, by leaps and bounds. She was a very popular woman doctor, at that time, and in those days and I think men felt comfortable sending their wives to her. Although she hadn't trained as a gynaecologist, she was, you know, regarded more or less as a gynaecologist, in those days.

RP: Could you give us, from that point, an entry into or her developing interest in politics, you know, after she established herself?

VC: Yes, as I say you know, she was actually doing two things at one time. She was consolidating her medical career, and she was consolidating politically, as well.

Because that was the time, as I say, the enactment of all these pieces of legislation, that were so discriminatory and cruel, they were cruel. And her friends also had returned to the country, I think, roundabout that time. Mahatma Gandhi was also in the country, in fact her mother worked as a secretary for some organization, at that time. And this is how it started, with the marches and the rallies in Gale

Street and in Red Square, mobilising against these acts, particularly, as I said, the Pegging Act the Land Tenure Act, whatever else act discriminated against them, that's how it started. But you know, it was such an upswell, it was such, it was a wonderful time, where people were so, they were so involved, they weren't apathetic, the way we are, today. They felt so strongly about the way they were discriminated against. And I think it was very much a natural, natural thing for her to get involved with, and it wasn't only her, she is one of those that is well-known, but there were lots of other women as well. Women who were housewives and young girls who all mobilised into protesting against these various pieces of legislation that pertained, at the time.

RP: Can you name any of the organisations that she formed or got involved in?

VC: Well I know she was involved in the NIC, at that stage. I'm not too sure, I could be wrong, but I think perhaps the South African Communist Party was around at that stage and she would have been involved in that. And I also think that when she was in England you know – now, when I think back to the question you asked me earlier - she was probably involved in that there, in her student days. The ANC, I think, was still very new roundabout that stage or - but I think she was leaning that way, even when it was in existence she was leaning towards that as well. So I mean, you know, nowadays we would say that her leanings were very left-wing, then. And they remained so throughout her life.

RP: Was she ever banned, house arrested?

VC: She wasn't banned, she wasn't house arrested, but she was imprisoned, for varying periods of time.

RP: Can you give us, expand on that, please?

VC: Well you know, as I say, all this happened before I was born, but I know she did so. I know that she served at least two terms of imprisonment, and perhaps more of shorter duration. Once she was imprisoned, I think it was in 1946 for six months, so she spent hard labour and she spent, I think, it was two or three months of that time in prison, then rest was suspended. So yes, she did serve time in prison, and during that time she, also many of her friends were imprisoned with her. And I think you know, this just made them even more determined to fight the evil legislation that existed then.

RP: What would you consider to be the heights of her career?

VC: Oh, Rajes, that is such a difficult question because I mean her life was dotted with highlights. It's hard to say off-the-cuff really. I think one of the highlights of her career was - well I think look, the real highlight was her political involvement, that was a highlight in itself. The fact, also that in the 1960's, when we were in England, we were left in England for a year because she was asked to serve in Nehru's health ministry, at that time. I think that was a highlight for her. Another highlight for her was when she was in prison in Maritzburg, and she received a visit from Nelson Mandela, at that time. I think an absolute highlight for her was the dawning of democracy. She was in exile in Harare at the time, and she was absolutely ecstatic. I think for her really that was the ultimate, because it proved that

whatever she had done, and whatever she had experienced, whatever she had gone through for the last fifty, sixty years, was all worthwhile.

RP: Could you tell us what actually, why did she leave South Africa, the second time?

VC: She left South Africa because she, although she hadn't been house arrested or banned, she did face a lot of harassment from the Security Branch, at that stage you know - spying on her and things like that. And also a cousin, to whom she was very close died in 1976/77, and then with this harassment, I think you know, she made the decision that she would leave and go to England. I think for her it wasn't a decision not to come back to South Africa, I think she did intend to come back, after a while. But as it happened, she was there and I think it was in 1978/79 she sent her passport for renewal and she got a letter back stating that they refused to renew her passport and thus she was effectively exiled in England, that's how the exile began.

RP: I see. She went to England and she went to several other countries, and landed back in Africa. Do you have any information on how that happened?

VC: Yes well as I say, she did go to England initially, because of the harassment and following the death of her cousin. And as I said, she had no intention of staying there permanently, but she was forced to. She was there for about five years I think, and in that time she was working, she was working at a clinic there. She was writing her memoirs, as she referred to them, she had contact with Dr Zainab Asvat, I think, who was in England, at the time she was editing her book. From England she went to

Australia because there was a young man that her club had sponsored when she was in an organisation called the Sydenham Cultural Institute. He was a surfer they sponsored him he got into Australia and he invited her over. And she did go to Australia she did a lot of voluntary work there. She was there for two years and then she received an invitation from one of the ministers that she was friendly with. One of the ministers in Harare, and he invited her to come to Harare and work. And this is what she did, she left Australia I think it was in 1982 or early 1983. And she went to work in Harare - she was attached to a big hospital there the Perenetwa Hospital. And she was there from 1982/3 until she returned to South Africa in 1991, I think it was.

RP: In her book "The Coolie Doctor", she has a photograph with some narration on relations with the United Nations, the UNO, do you have any info on that?

VC: No, I don't. I think the picture you actually referred to is a gathering, at a function where she is pictured with the Consul-General of the US at that time. If I'm not mistaken his name was Mr [Tooey?], because I remembered meeting him, as well. I think she also had a friend at the United Nations, Mr Enuga Reddy, who also came to South Africa at the time of her return from Harare. I think that was really the extent of her involvement with the United Nations, if there was any.

RP: Having then done this exile stint and coming back to 1990, now what were here impressions in exile that influenced her life inside the country?

VC: I think whilst she was in exile, particularly in Harare, she met lots of people who were also in exile - they were very politically active. She was very friendly, she used to talk about Govan Mbeki, she was very friendly with a gentleman, with a family the Applerajus, and she was in and out of their home, and Jaya [Appleraju] had many of these people visiting him, at that stage. The Mbekis and Ronny Kasrils, they were all friends and as I say this ferment, this discussion, these debates about freeing the country were going on there, didn't diminish at all. They were just waiting, they were biding their time when they could come back to a democratic South Africa. So I think all that influenced her, all the people that she met there, at that stage of her life.

RP: What were her impressions when she came back, you know, I mean with the forces inside the country?

VC: She was very much - what word is it? I can't think of the word now, but she was very much for what was happening in the country, for the forces within the country, although she was totally opposed to the tricameral government, at that stage, the tricameral system. She was all for the, I think it was the UDF, at that stage, the ANC, I mean you know, she always said years and years ago, when no one would admit to it. She came out openly and she said "well I am a member of the ANC." This was while the ANC was still a banned organization, so when she came back she got immediately into the thick of things. It was, as though she was never outside of the country, because she knew exactly what was going on. The activists who were outside of the country knew more than we did, within the country. So they just picked

up where they left off, and then when she came back many of the exiles returned as well. So they had a readymade situation for themselves, and at the time, I mean this was two, three years prior to democracy, there was such a lot going on, it was actually a very exciting time for her. And she spoke at rallies and meetings against the tricam, and she thoroughly enjoyed it. She was in her element, she really was, you know her so well Rajes, you know I mean you know talking about, sorry, to go back to people that she knew in Zimbabwe as well. I think you were there, you were there, Phyllis was there, all of you, you know, it was one big family there, just waiting to come back to a democratic South Africa.

RP: Do you have any firm views on exactly what path should be followed, you know post-independence here? Before we get to that, did she vote?

VC: Yes. Oh, she was very proud to go and vote. She was mobilising people to go and vote, and vote ANC. I actually have a picture of her in a nice little ANC cap and, you know, I think she had a little banner or something. Oh no, she was very active, although she was eighty something at that stage. Oh, of course she voted. That was, you're talking about highlights in her career, that certainly was a highlight. We all went down to Centenary High and that's where we voted.

RP: Did she have any firm views, you know, of what development and how development should go, and so on, any particular structure or system of government, or you know?

VC: I don't think she did actually. I could be wrong. But I think for her, you know, since she had been so

politically active from 1940 onwards, I would say I mean for her the be-all and the end-all was to see democracy in her lifetime. And that was the ultimate and when it happened I don't think she thought further, with regard to governance and policies and things like that. As far as she was concerned, well it's the ANC that's going to be in power, and that's how it should be, and it's going to work.

RP: A final question on rounding up, what effect did she have on your life, personally?

VC: Profound. And I'm only beginning to realise that now after her death, you know. I didn't realise it at the time - we have always been very different personalities. But I think what she has given me is confidence; she's given me security; she's given me belief in myself; she's always wanted me to be the best that I can be. And do the best that I can do. You know, if I think about it later, perhaps I'll think of a million other things that I should have said to you. But I think she's given me, me. I am who I am because of her. Because she's always been there she's always been such a presence in my life. And I think that if I can in any small way, be just a little bit like her, I would have done well, you know. But as I say, I think everything that I am, I owe to her. I do.

RP: And how do you think people in Chatsworth or the other Indian areas or the congress areas will remember her?

VC: I think they will remember her, you know, with mixed emotions, really. They will remember her as a firebrand; they will remember her as a person who certainly did not pull any punches. I hope they will remember her as someone who was always very honest, and she had a very high degree of integrity.

And whatever she did she did not do because she was motivated, she did it because she believed in something, and not for any self-aggrandisement. So I hope they will remember her as that, in that way. I think they will also remember her as a very colourful character, very outspoken. But I think, essentially, a very warm, very caring individual, totally unmaterialistic.

RP: Thank you very much.

VC: Thank you, Rajes.

RP: Could you give us a description of the impact of your mother's life on your own, the fears the anxieties?

VC: It did have a tremendous impact Rajes, because it impacted negatively on family life. There was always the fear that she would be arrested, she would be imprisoned or put under house arrest, or be given banning orders. There was always the fear that there was someone lurking somewhere. There was the fear for her safety, and then, you know, family life suffered, as well, because she was always at a meeting, she was always at some gathering where politics was the main issue. And we didn't really have much of a family life, and at that stage, it was just her and me. And then I was in school, she was busy with her political activities and her work, and then I married in the late 1960's and I went off. So and then when my children started growing, my mother wasn't in the picture, all that often. So yes, you know, looking back we could have had far more of a family life, but I don't think she would have wanted it any other way, and I don't begrudge the fact that it did take its toll on our family life, at all.

RP: Whenever people talk about Dr Goonam, they always talk about her social life, her parties and her friendships, and so on, could you expand on these?

VC: You know, I think Dr Goonam was famed for the parties she threw, and she was very popular. She was a very popular guest at parties, as well. I mean you couldn't have a guest list without having her name on it. If I talk about the parties I'm aware of in our home, they were massive undertakings. I mean she would shop for days beforehand; she would do all the cooking herself, all the entertaining. My job, I also had work to do, my job was to serve the drinks, what have you, to make sure that all the cutlery, the crockery, everything was laid out. And here would come these friends of hers, and they would have a whale of a time. The scotch would flow, the other drinks would flow, the snacks the food would flow, but most of all, the conversation would be absolutely dynamic. I think anyone would have died to be a part of that group. And then invariably the singsong would start. Or what they used to call in those days, because she had her group of cronies that went back thirty, forty, fifty years in fact they were childhood friends. Monty again, he was in the thick of it, Dr Nad Padayachee, Nad Pillay, Uncle - Dr Chetty, BT Chetty, we knew him as Thagie, and there were so many more people. So inevitably, towards the end or in the middle of the party, they would bring out their pots and Uncle Thagie, Uncle Nad would start singing and Goonam, of course, would be banging on the pots and playing the drums and the symbols. And they knew how to have a good time. They loved it, they absolutely loved it, and everyone loved it, as

well. I think we as children, me and all their children, all of us, were drawn into it as well. And we had a whale of a time and, I think you know, it did shape all of us to a very large extent, at the time, and afterwards as well.

RP: Do you think that she would've chosen to have lived her life in any other fashion?

VC: Definitely not. Never! I mean she was never one to take life lightly. What she did, she gave one hundred percent to. She was, I suppose nowadays, you would say always over the top. Nothing was wishy-washy or mediocre with her, she lived life to the fullest and I don't think she would've wanted to change a single thing.

RP: Thank you.

VC: Thanks.

RP: You've given us an insight into her social life

VC: Yes, one was the parties that were hosted, not only in our home but they all took turns, and they loved parties because in those days house parties were the thing. So it was Uncle Monty's house; it was Uncle Dadoo's house; it was Dr KN Pillay's house; Nad Padayachee's. And so it went on and on. Apart from that she used to have annual Christmas parties. Now her Christmas parties were held on Dingaan's Day, that was December 16th. The name has changed now. But that was such a big party, that was such a big event for her, because she would start shopping months in advance to buy gifts for the children, and she would invite her nurses' children, and her nurses' sister, and the family and they would come and we would all be there. And we used to have a Father Christmas, a man that was a family friend as well, Sylvester, and he suited the part because he was a nice big-size man, so we'd fish out this annual suit of his, put him in his suit, put him in his hood, and he'd come, you know. All the children would be tense with

anticipation and excitement, and we'd all be gathered there, and then we'd hear the bell ringing and then we'd see this larger than life Father Christmas pulling into the party. And the condition was that each child, or each person present at the party would have to do something before they got their gift, so they would have to sing, they would have to dance, they would have to recite a limerick, or something, and having got that part over with then the food and the music and the laughter and the jollity would follow. So that was one. The other very big occasion in our house which had also been something very big from the time I can remember is Divali. Our Divali celebrations would last two, three days. My aunt at that time, my mother's older sister was alive and her house used to be the gathering point then for the parties. And I remember we all used to be so excited because the sweetmeats would be prepared, you know weeks in advance, days in advance, and the lights would go up and then on Divali day all the kids, that's me and my cousins' children, we'd go around delivering all the parcels. It was such a big thing in those days, and then we'd come back to a lovely lunch, and lovely supper and then the highlight for me, was the two dresses that I always received on Divali day, one for the morning and one for the evening. And then, of course, the fireworks in the evening. So that was always a big thing, and then following the death of my aunt, my mother took that on and it would be an equally big function in our house. And as I say she used to make the sweetmeats herself, she used to love making halva and she had all the gadgets and she used to get us involved and stirring and stirring and stirring that. But those were memorable days, I mean there are so many pictures, there are so many people known and unknown that have gone in and out of our home.

RP: While she was in Zimbabwe were you able to make contact with her?

VC: Yes. I visited her whenever she was in exile. When she was in England, I visited her on three or four occasions, two or three times with my children, who were very young, at that time. And I remember one incident where - my mother was in her seventies when she was in England, and I used to worry how she's going to come, how she's going to drive in that traffic to come and pick us up from the airport, but I tell you nothing daunted her. She would come with a friend, on one or two occasions she came with a friend, a Mr Chetty, to come and pick us up. And he was a very bad driver, he was always driving on the pavement and everywhere, but on the road, so I used to dread that, actually. On another occasion she came by train, she took the train and she met us at the airport, and here I was with my two children. One was about - they were about 9/10/7, at that stage, and we're getting into the train with our suitcases, with my mother, and it was quite an undertaking, because any of you who have traveled on those tubes will know how quickly those doors close. And then getting out of the train equally fast with luggage and children and mother and everything, and then getting into her car which was parked at the station, making the hazardous drive with her at the wheel to her flat, and then once again offloading children and baggage and everything up those steep steps, to get to the bedrooms upstairs. So you know those are the memories of when she was in London. When she was in Australia as well I also went to live in Australia with my family, so of course, we had contact there. And when she came to Harare I would make Harare my stop on my visits to Australia because at that stage I had permanent residence in Australia, and I would require every three years to renew my residence. So in the couple

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of years that she was in Harare I visited her, not less than three times, definitely three or four times. Sometimes with my girls, sometimes not. So when she was in exile we had a lot of contact. I mean you know she used to write letters, she was a very good correspondent, but I think people were in those days, you know. They had a habit of writing letters. And funnily enough, I looked at a letter the other day that my aunt had written to my mother, probably the last letter my aunt in India wrote to my mother. It was written to her in April 1978, and my aunt died in June of that year. So we used to write regularly once a week. I used to write to my mother and I would get a letter by return post within a couple of days, and so it went. So that contact was always there.

RP: As we change these questions, did you give your testimony to the TRC?

VC: No.

RP: Have you any reason why?

VC: Mum's testimony? No. I think if I'm not mistaken, you know, there was so much going on at that stage in her life, and also in mine, I think she was wanting to give testimony, but I really don't know what happened in that regard. But no, she didn't give testimony, and neither did I.

RP: What are your views on the TRC? Do you think that it achieved its mandate?

VC: I'm not sure. I'm sure some people would agree, those people who had a successful outcome, they would say that it has achieved a mandate, for others who are still waiting to be compensated, they would say it hasn't achieved the mandate. But there are also some others who would say, you know, it's not easy just to shake hands and to tell your story, and to forgive. You know it's not so easy, because human nature is such that we do want some type of retribution. So it might be psychologically, it might be the

thing to be considered. But I mean when people have suffered and gone through so much torture, they wait years and years and years to be vindicated, in some way. I don't think it's as easy as saying, well okay, shake hands and make friends and that's that. That's going to heal. You need more than that, I think. Sometimes, I've heard it said in some of the circles, that I've been associated with, that you'd had to have a good fight, fight it out, and get it out of your system. This gentleman's agreement just doesn't work. So I know Rajes, it just depends on what your experiences are, and how you look at the whole thing.

RP: What is your view on the release of Mandela? Why do you think that the Nationalist Government released him when they did?

VC: I think they had no option. I mean South Africa was isolated, it was facing sanctions. And economically, I think, what really happened in this country is dictated by economics. I mean the country was not working. He needed to be released. They had to release him. There was no way they could keep him in jail. I mean the forces were there at the gate, they had to open the gates. And I mean even that took long enough, because he was in jail for 27-years, how much longer could they keep him there? I mean if he had died in jail, can you imagine what would've happened in this country? So I mean they didn't do it out of the goodness of their hearts. They did it because they had to. That was it. FW had a bit of foresight to see that. And in return he became a martyr, I mean he got the Nobel Peace prizes also. Nobody does anything for nothing. They did it for a reason. Rather to avoid a bloodbath or total isolation, they did it.

RP: We now come to the question of the government style in power now, after having gone through CODESA, and

negotiations, et cetera, do you have a critical viewpoint on whether the government has delivered all the promises that it made at election time?

VC: Rajes, let me say one thing, I might have been Dr Goonam's daughter, but I certainly wasn't a politician; I certainly wasn't an activist, and people who know me will tell you that. And I mean, I think, it happened with a lot of children of the activists, they did not become politically involved, for some reason. I mean having grown up in those circumstances, where politics, you breathe politics, lived politics, your while life was politics, you suffered because of politics. And as I say, I'm not, and I never was an activist, neither am I a political analyst. And once again if you ask whether promises have been adhered to, once again there are points for and against. As an academic I can tell you, I mean you ask the man in the street whose circumstances have not changed, post-democracy. He's gonna say: "No, nothing has improved." I said to my maid when we had the second election, the last time, I said: "did you go and vote?" She said: "why must I go and vote? Nobody's done anything for me, I'd rather vote for Jesus." So, you know this is how the man in the street is thinking. It's those people who have benefited perhaps from a democratic government who will tell you that things have improved. But, you know, if I have to look at it as a non-political person, I would say there are good things and there are bad things that have occurred since democracy. And I don't think that we should hide these things and say: "oh, no but everything is hunky-dory, and everything is fine." I mean you know there's a lot of corruption, that's been exposed; there's been a lot of nepotism; and I think some statements that have been made, I mean like when people are denying that HIV is in

fact a big cause of death in this country. When our leaders are not acting responsibly, then I think we, as South Africans must do something about it. We must make our voices heard. So, yes and no. Some promises have been delivered on, because although there is a lot of corruption now, at least there's far more transparency now. We are aware of the corruption that is taking place, whereas when it happened under the NAT Government, nobody knew what they were up to, because they kept everything so cloak and dagger. So perhaps these are all hallmarks of, you know, a government that will get somewhere. I mean lots of people are very optimistic; lots of people are very pessimistic. It just depends. But I think what really is a major bone of contention now, is crime. And I think, if the government can really do something about crime and show that they are serious about crime and coming down more severely on offenders, perhaps there would be a lot more confidence in the country and in the government, and in investments in this country. Because you know human rights is one thing, it's fine, yes, everyone is entitled to their rights, but people don't realise that together with rights goes responsibility. You have to be responsible. And you know seeing to the human rights of the offender, rather than the victim, I mean that's not on. You know a person can commit the most heinous crime, gets a suspended sentence, or he's out of jail within two to five years. That's unacceptable. You know, so I think more can be done with regard to crime and that means - you know I realise we are carrying a lot of baggage from the past, the police system is all corrupt, and all skewed, so is the justice system, so is correctional services, and they realise that changes must be made in these services, but it's going to take a long time and until then the man in the street is going to bear the brunt of

whatever is going on around him. So to get back to your initial question, yes and no, promises have been delivered on, and promises have not been delivered on.

RP: As a medical doctor, do you think that the measures that have been put in place, you know, with the advent of AIDS and so on are sufficient, or does it address the problem adequately?

VC: Well, I'm not a medical doctor.

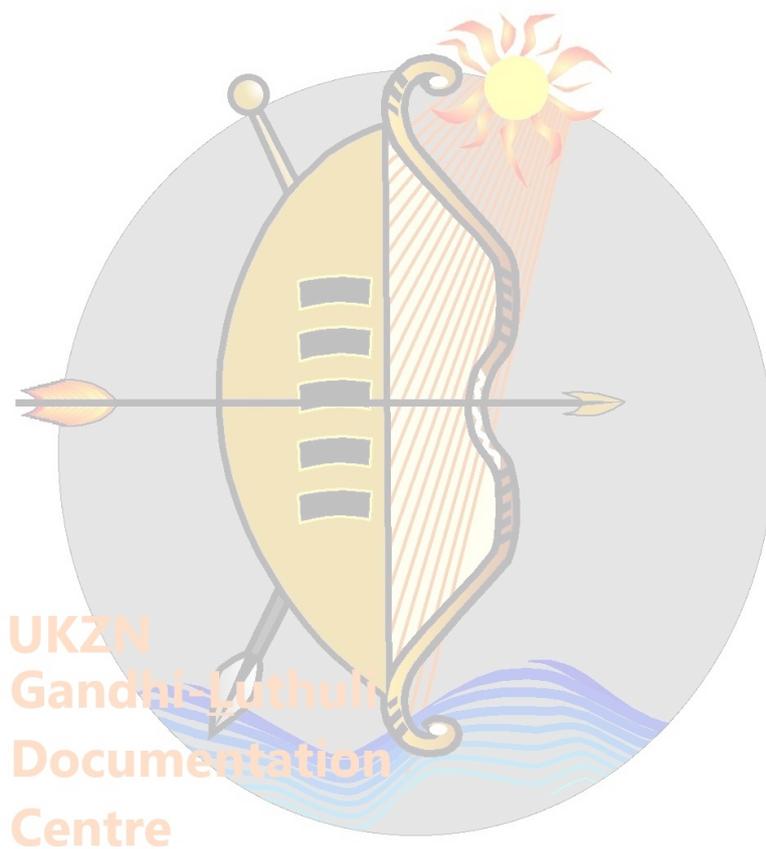
RP: Oh.

VC: No, I'm not a medical doctor. I have a doctorate in criminology. But I don't think - once again I'm not qualified to talk - but the fact that you have been denying the severity of HIV/AIDS all along, and you have been denying antiretroviral drugs to mothers to prevent AIDS in the children, I mean that's a serious indictment on the government, really. So maybe, something is being done now but maybe it's too little too late. We have to - you know, you have to be proactive before it even happens. But how do you convince teenagers, young people, or anybody for that matter, to be more responsible sexually. And I mean, I think one way you can do it, if our leaders - if people who are highly valued, if they can set the example for the others to follow, maybe it will happen. Maybe if people have more stability, more job stability, more security in their homes, as they live a better standard of life, they will not go from partner to partner. Perhaps then. But as it is, the statistics tell us that the mortality rate is so high. We have a higher mortality rate now than we have a birthrate. So it's actually quite frightening. Maybe enough is not being done. I really don't know what the answer to that is, Rajes, because I think if anybody knew that, we wouldn't be in the predicament we are now.

RP: Thank you very much.

VC: Thank you.

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