

Killie Campbell Africana Library

Oral History Project

Interviewee: J. Dube

Interviewer(s): A. Manson, D. Collins Mabaso and R. Mngomezulu as interpreter

Interview length: 38 minutes

Subject: Her Late Husband, J.L. Dube

Accession No. KCAV 116

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(This interview got a lot of missing information indicated by blank spaces)

Q. Mrs. Dube, I wondered whether we could start off by asking you about your own life, where you were born, where you came from, where your parents came from.

A. You know I don't... You know it's hard to remember some... most of the things had disappeared. I was born [pause] and my parents trekked up to Johannesburg and then... So we went there. [In the Transvaal] No [at Ladysmith] Ladysmith. At the college there. [Were they converts, your grandparents? to Christians] My father was the first. [in Ladysmith?]

Q. Which clan did hey belong to?

A. To tribe or what? [You don't belong to any particular clan like Hlubi?]

Q. When your parent went to Johannesburg, did you go with them?

A. Yes but we stayed there... we stayed there a little longer I stayed there a little longer with my mother. [Can you remember what date that was more or less?] [Was it before the Boer War?] After.

Q. When were you born Mrs. Dube? How old are you now?

A. I'm 81. You...come into trouble at 81.

Q. So how did you meet Dr. Dube?

A. Well, I attended St. Chads.

Q. You meet him at... in the Transvaal? And what was he doing up there at that time?

A. (Nothing written I assume there was no answer)

Q. Who did he ask for funds from?

A. Appealing for funds as well as overseas. So mostly he got his support...

Q. Mrs. Dube when you met Dr. Dube had you already been involved in politics?

A. Well I was not a politician. He was. He was a politician. (Were you a member of the ANC?) No. I wasn't a member but I was interested because he... when we were married he carried on so I had to support him. (You weren't involved in the Women's League?) No. You mean in all these strikes that they had?

Q. At the time that you got married do you know what position Dr. Dube held? He was running the school at that time (He was) Was he involved in any other organizations?

A. He was, but mostly where he was very interested is with the school.
(Was the newspaper still operating here?)
(Who was writing for the newspaper?)
(You don't remember the names of the editors?)

Q. Did you teach at that school?

A. No I didn't teach. I... housework

Q. So he was still active in the ANC at the time?

Q. do you remember any of the early people?

Q. Do you remember Pixley kaSeme?

Q. What do you remember him for? How did he strike you?

A. Some portions he agreed.

Q. Can you remember what they didn't agree about?

Q. Mrs. Dube we've read that Dr. Dube was very close to the Zulu Royal Family and that the Zulu Royal Family had a big part to play in African politics. Do you know what connections he had with the Royal Family and...?

A. You know it's a little hard.

(Questions and answers through interpreter from this point.) [Through interpreter]It was very correct that he was so much interested in the affairs of the Zulus, even during the times of Cetshwayo when Cetshwayo was arrested he was so much interested in the whole thing.

Q. Does she remember what Dr. Dube connections were with the Zulu Royal Family? Did he have any connection with it?

A. He's actually not connected to the Zulu kingdom, as it is, but he was born just here, Maqadini.

Q. Mrs. Dube do you remember...?

[Indistinct]

Q. Can you remember your late husband's attitude to the ANC?

A. He had a very regard for the ANC it was just part of his life.

Q. He didn't differ with the leadership at any time? We read that he did differ, we want to know a bit more about it.

A. It was very difficult because this organization was in the founding so that particular somebody had his own opinion. So it was a little difficult for them to come together on one point.

Q. Does Mrs. Dube remember issues where there was disagreement?

A. it is very hard for me to recollect what took place but on quite a number of occasions this... as for Dr. John Dube, he was always aware of the difficulties that are confronting our African people, so he was always on the active side. We cannot definitely recollect instance of difference.

Q. How did Dr. Dube regard the Communist Party of South Africa?

A. I would definitely say my late husband was not interested in the Communist Party. (He didn't want the ANC to co-operate with the Communist Party?) No.

Q. How did he get on with the government at that time?

A. There was no co-operation between the two because they couldn't understand what he wanted for the African people.

Q. Did he feel there were no white political leaders that he could trust?

A. There were... he could trust, who could also understand.

Q. Who were those, do you remember?

A. Could you name... (I think people from the Liberal party, perhaps Dr. Brookes, Schreiner) Those... There was some disagreement between him and some White leaders because he saw no success that was taking place, here in the school that he founded, for he saw that he is from civilized countries here they do not understand him, he's trying to build something but some are not understanding. So there's

misunderstanding. It's something that hurt him time and again. (Now this is between him and people like Dr. Paton? Or between him...) Dr. Paton knew he field.

Q. In the 1930's, can you remember the White people with whom Dr. Dube used to feel that he had some common understanding?

A. You mean in the field of education or... (Anywhere) Well he had friends who supported him like Campbells... It would be very difficult for me to recollect their actual names. But he had support from the Campbells and a certain parliamentarian. He got difficulty when coming back to South Africa from overseas. It was... there was a belief at that time that the Black man cannot pass the Standard Four class and go ahead with his education. The belief at that time was that when Black men get educated they are going to be spoiled and think they are just on a par with the White man. It was just because of this suppression that Dr. Dube thought that to build up a school for the African people would be something that is going to help the African people to further their education. And the idea of a press emanated from this belief that the people of South Africa are being suppressed. So he thought that he is going to get a mouthpiece in the press. So he started the "Ilanga".

Q. Didn't he approve of the missionary school? Why did he feel it was necessary to have his own school?

A. He did not like the education that was being given by the missionaries for the very fact that his was suppose to have a say in the royal family of the Maqadis, but he was just discarded, so he thought by building a school of his own for the African things would be better for the Africans. That was during the time of certain missionaries. American missionaries American Board Missionaries. (So in other words he felt Africans resisted... the other Africans who'd become converts they opposed the Africans who'd become converts) He was also a Christian, he wanted people to be more civilized, that is the point.

Q. Mrs. Dube, we heard that you ran an organization called... a society called "Women of Africa". "Daughters of Africa", can you tell us a bit about it.

A. it was just imagination that came to me that if we the daughters of Africa can come together and not concentrate so much on Christianity but concentrate on things that are going to help African people. (So what sort of things did you do?) It was just to inspire African ladies, especially married women that they should not actually concentrate on Christianity, but they've got to see to the needs of an African somebody and to inspire their intelligent halves to move and to...(Did you have meetings?) Yes. (How many women belonged?) I would definitely just say roughly over five thousand (?)

Q. When you think of the 1930's how do you think of those years? Do you see them as being very exciting, interesting, very challenging? (From?) From now. You look back

A. I would say they were very quiet years because people could understand somebody who they regarded as leader then something. I would say it was a very quiet time.

Q. (Inaudible)

A. Oh I didn't have anything to do with that. My husband...

Q. When your husband died... before he died, do you know whether he felt as if the ANC was getting anywhere at that time?

A. He had hope since there were men such as A. W. Champion, the late Mr. Luthuli. But he didn't have so much interest and so much trust in Mr. A.W. Champion, but he had trust in Mr. Luthuli, so he had visualized a ... clear future.

Q. Did... Wilberforce, can you tell us a bit about Wilberforce Institute?

A. It was a missionary school under the A.M.E. It had the influence of the Negroes in the States. (Who was in charge?) The headmaster Reverend Magayi. (Did you belong to the A.M.E.?) My parents were the A.M.E.'s but myself and my husband we were/are Anglicans. No not my husband, my forefathers were Anglican, my father and mother decided to change over to the A.M.E. but eventually this old lady [interpreter referring to the interviewee] returned to the Anglicans. (Why? Were you not satisfied with A.M.E.?) I was staying with my uncle, brother to my father, he was an Anglican, so of course that influenced me, and at the time my old man was still alive and he was an Anglican.

Q. Do you remember, did your husband travel outside of South Africa after you married?

A. Oh yes. He travelled quite a lot. (Can you remember what he went simply collecting money?) There were meetings he had to be invited to. It was in connection with the welfare of African people. (Sort of Pan-African meetings?) Pan African congress is just a new thing. (Did you ever go?) Well I accompanied him. (Where did you go?) England. (Can you give us your impressions of England?) Well I was interested to find the difference of the White man here was... one I found

[Tape interrupted]

[Song]