

## **THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE REMOVED FROM MANDLANZINI AND THEIR RETURN TO RICHARDS BAY AFTER 1994**

Hebert Sihle Ntuli & Zumisile Felicity Nhlenyama

### **ABSTRACT**

From 1960 to 1983, the apartheid government forcibly removed more than 3.5 million South Africans from their traditional areas of domicile to different areas. Such removals were for different reasons such as clearance of ‘black sport’, relocation as per Influx Control Legislation, urban relocation, relocation for Betterment Schemes, and relocation for Homeland Consolidation. Black communities were in the majority of cases the main victims of such removals. In spite of the pervasiveness of such removals, very little is written on the impact or effect to the victims. The main objective for this paper is to present the political and socio-economic conditions of the people who were removed when Richards Bay was established. The narrative is based on qualitative research which brings out the sentiments and attitudes of the victims. Qualitative research approaches using focus group discussion, direct observations and in-depth interviews with selected members of the community. Prudently presented themes were sifted from the data that discussed the effects of forced removals to the people who were forcibly relocated from Mandlanzini. From qualitative data, it emerged that these people were not relocated for their improvement but to open up space for white settlement and to create economic enclave controlled by whites. This paper traces their history from pre-apartheid era to the democratic dispensation when some of these people returned to their traditional land.

**Keywords:** Apartheid, Forced Removal, Mthiyane, Mandlanzini

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the “general election” of 1948, the National Party (NP) won the majority of seats. One of the major issues of its election platform was *die swart gevaar* or black danger. The period 1949 - 1951 was marked by the government’s initiating legislation to create a greater separation between races, or the beginning of its apartheid policy, which was later to crystallize into a policy of separate development. The National Party argued that apartheid was a realistic alternative to what they called the dangerous option of integration (Butler 1977). The apartheid system pursued two main goals: sustaining political supremacy and promoting economic prosperity of the white minority who were less than 20% of the total population. The political supremacy required marginalising of African majority while at the same integration of African workers to satisfy industries’ growing demands for cheap labour (Wilson and Ramphele 1989).

South Africa’s mineral-driven industrialisation in the first half of the twentieth century increased demands for labour in the cities, leading to growing African urban settlements. Whites feared that this would create a critical mass political mobilisation of urban workers that would threaten political stability. This tension explains why the apartheid system was neither stable over time nor followed a linear development trajectory. Instead, from the period when the

National Party came to power in 1948 to the first democratic elections in 1994 represent three different phases reflecting power shift between the purists favouring total segregation and the pragmatists, who focused on economic development (D O'Meara 1996).

At least three developments led the apartheid regime to shift course to implementing more rigid segregationist policies throughout the 1950s. First, the National Party realised that the pragmatists' approach of regulating the movement of African labour through a labour bureau system failed to establish control over the allocation of African workers (Posel 2011). Overcrowding and poverty on reserves assigned to Africans had led to urban migration. As a result, African urban population grew by 50% and political protest increased during the 1950s. Secondly, the government faced growing pressure from white farmers to remove Africans from their land. White farmers wanted more fertile land. While this politically powerful group had previously relied on large numbers of unskilled workers, increased mechanism of agricultural production in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shifted the demand to a smaller and more highly skilled workforce to operate new machines and thus create labour surplus on farms (Platzky and Walker (eds.) 1984). Thirdly, in the context of decolonisation of other parts of Africa, international opposition to apartheid racism increased.

Subsequent to the above developments, the apartheid government passed a legislation that formed the legal basis of the Homeland or Bantustan system. The Group Areas Act of 1950, which tried to create ethnically homogenous townships outside the cities and forcefully removed the people according to their racial classification, as codified in the Population Registration Act of 1950 (Naras and Seekings). The period 1952 – 1961 was one of turmoil in South Africa. In a spirit of hope, the African leaders pressed on with their defiance campaign and used all means at their disposal to thwart the racist policy of divide and rule. They clung to South African citizenship and refused to sell their birth-right. The government responded in an uncompromising way to the challenge presented by the oppressed people. The response was positive only in so far as it changed the emphasis of its apartheid policy from trusteeship to separate development in subsequent years. According to the apartheid government, the latter was a sincere and genuine plan to enable the various black nations to pursue their own interest or affairs along their own lines of common culture, language, customs and traditions. This system was not viewed as repression or exploitation, but as a means of economic progress over and against poverty.

The policy of separate development envisaged the territorial partitioning of South Africa into an axial white-controlled heartland and a constellation of black homelands. Eventually, the Bantu Resettlement Act of 1954 created ten separate homelands: KwaZulu (Zulu ethnicity), Transkei and Ciskei (Xhosa), Venda (Venda), Bophuthatswana (Tswana), Gazankulu (Tsonga), Lebowa (Sotho), KaNgwane (Swazi), KwaNdebele (Ndebele), Qwaqwa (Sotho). The highly contoured and fragmented shape of homeland territories, which were largely based on the native reserves demarcated in the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, show that the sitting of the homelands was determined by the interest of white farmers and location of mineral deposits rather than by historic tribal areas as claimed by the apartheid regime (Butler 1977). The Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 and Bantu Homeland Constitution Act of 1971 established political separation of Bantustans; inhabitants became "citizens" of their respective homelands and were thus, regarded as foreigners in South Africa (Manger and Malaudz 2011). Even if a person was not living in or had not been to any homeland, he or she was declared a citizen of the homeland where his or her language was spoken. With this legislation, black people became aliens in their own country of birth (Desmond 1971).

The regime justified these reforms by adopting the rhetoric of “separate development” and even “decolonisation” claiming that these policies would grant self-determination to nations within borders of their historic homelands (Miller 2016). However, only four of the ten homelands (Transkei, Venda, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana) subsequently accepted “independence” status between 1976 and 1981. This system of “independent nations” served as justification for a large scale removal of people and became the bedrock of large scale spatial segregation – grand apartheid. Particular in 1960s and 1970s, the government forcefully removed Africans from “white areas” to homelands and controlled the inflow of people into cities through a pass system. While the exact statistics do not exist, most studies estimate that a total of at least 3.5 million people were removed to Bantustans within a decade (Unterhalter 1987). This paper will focus on the Mthiyane people who were forcibly removed from Mandlanzini, present day Richards Bay.

Although it is common to associate segregation and these forced removals to the apartheid regime due to the role it played in the implementation of the rigorous segregation policy and forced removals, it is worth noting that these policies of dispossession and segregation had started before the National Party came into power and introduced apartheid legislation. Examples of pre-apartheid legislation that alienated land from black people include the 1913 Native Land and the 1936 Native Trust Land Act (Baldwin 1975). These laws served to limit the freedom of all black people by controlling their movement, limiting their power to own land or businesses and exploiting their labour to the benefit of white South Africans. Some of apartheid’s most oppressive laws were built upon earlier regulations that sought to control the movement and the rights of all who were not white. One example is the, 1925 Areas Reservation Bill which sought to restrict Indians (Mabin 1992). However, it was the Group Areas Act of 1950 that formalised and rigorously implemented forced removals from urban areas on an enormous scale.

In 1984, Cheryl Walker and Laurine Platzky published a book entitled *Surplus People*, in which they refer “surplus people”, to those black people who were forcibly removed from their land. From the investigation reported in their book, Cheryl and Platzky reported that from 1960 to 1982 about 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and land and dumped in barren and uninhabitable areas. During this period, tens of thousands of children died as their families were forcibly moved and exposed to harsh conditions (Pilger 2007). Extreme and brutal force was used to have the policy of separateness implemented. The irony of the system was often captured in the names given to the new places where people were dumped. Names given to the townships included, Thokoza (joy), Masiphumelele (let us succeed), Bophelong (the place of life), Gugulethu (our heritage), Refengko (give us peace), Boipatong (hiding place), Seshego (African basket). These names were coined to express happiness and safety for the victims. In terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and later 1957, various people in the country were assigned to different residential townships and places in the Bantustan.

In order to circumvent black resistance and international censure, the government had to “coax” black leaders through bribes and other means in a “divide and rule strategy” to get black South African to move. Chiefs were given incentives such as better houses at the new areas, money and farming equipment. After inducing the chief to agree to the policy, they termed it “consultation” process but where there was resistance, the government did not hesitate to use drastic measures such as selective sanctions like cutting off essential services and sometimes banning community meetings. In some cases, Homeland governments were used to help to achieve government objectives. Homeland leaders such as Kaizer Mathanzima, General Oupa Gqozo and Lucas Mangope were instructed by their masters in Pretoria to go and convince the

communities who refused forced removal to relocate (Manson and Lawrance 1984). It was within this period, 1960 to 1983, of force removal through the use of subtle and drastic measures that the Mthiyane people were relocated. This community was forcibly removed from their area of origin (Mandlanzini) and was relocated to Ntambanana, an inhospitable and arid land of 69.1 kilometres north-west of Richards Bay where they could not even till the soil. Like many other affected communities, for example in Bhengazi and Sabokwe, today, they cohere around memories of their historical suffering, fortitude, courage and survival.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A study of literature indicates that little is written about the political and socio-economic conditions of the people who were removed from Mandlanzini and their return to Richards Bay after 1994. It was for this reason that this study had to rely mainly on oral interviews, direct observations, group discussions and newspaper cuttings. Oral interviews, however, have strengths and limits. One of the strengths of oral interviews is to supplement or aid our interpretation of written sources. Through oral evidence the researcher may be able to reveal evidence which might not be obtained from any other source. Further, oral interviews may give the researcher the autonomy to ask questions that may never have been asked in the past and also open new areas of research (McDowell 2002). One of the limitations of oral interviews, especially from eye-witnesses, is that evidence does not remain fixed or consistent overtime. Some parts of the narrative are typically confused – the sequence of events is often jumbled, the perception of time and distance distorted, and the sense of a wider narrative obscured.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

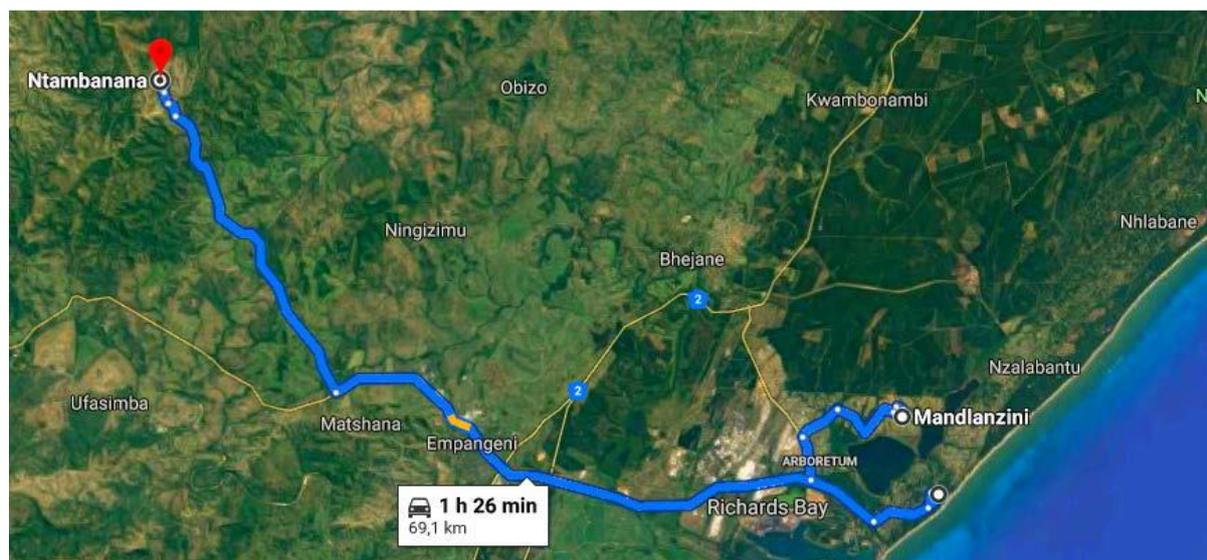
As indicated, the methodology of this research involved a qualitative approach which was selected for its suitability to provide ways of understanding experience or phenomena from the perspective of those who live it (Masoga and Shokane 2020). Through oral interviews, sentiments and attitudes of the victims were clearly articulated. Based on the outcomes of the interviews, and collection and analysis of data, an investigation was conducted to determine how forced removals affected the lives of the people who were removed from Mandlanzini. Purposive sampling was employed to select 30 interviewees. The participants were approached face to face and telephonically to participate in the study. The demographics of the participants were as follows: They were males and females, their ages ranged from 40 and 70 and their language was IsiZulu which is spoken in KwaZulu Natal Province.

## **RESEARCH FIELD**

Umhlathuze Local Municipality represented the research field for this study. This municipality is named after the Umhlathuze River which flows eastwards across the municipality to the Indian Ocean, its flood-water filling a large number of pans which provide a breeding ground for waterfowl and a variety of fish. It covers an area of 793 square kilometres with a population of more than 300 000. The population is mixed, according to the race classifications still used in South Africa to track racial transformation. IsiZulu is the most spoken language followed by English and Afrikaans. Nowadays, most people depend on migrant labour for a living. But in the past, they depended on agriculture. It is one of the best-favoured regions of KwaZulu, with

its high rainfall, its tropical fruits, its forests and its fishing potential, in both the sea and Lake Mzingazi.

Figure 1: Map of Umhlathuze Local Municipality



Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/umhlathuze>

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The Epitome of Life in Mandlanzini prior Forced Removal, 1976

Before 1976, life at Mandlanzini was based on farming, cattle rearing, gathering and hunting. Farming was mainly subsistence. The forest provided a very good place to grow vegetables, as the land was rich. The men speared fish from the nearby Mzingazi Lake. Women and men gathered fruits while young boys looked after cattle, which were a measure of wealth and power. Men needed cattle for bride price (lobolo). The green pastures around Mzingazi Lake provided grazing land for cattle. Their land which they planted with saligna gumtrees made them more prosperous than any other Zulu tribe (Interview, Mthiyane 2017). Some of the men earned their living by forestry. They sold trees to big timber mills in the nearby firms controlled by whites.

The swampy lowland soil near the sea was ideal for growing revenue-earning blue gum-trees (Durban Bureau, 19 December 1970). Using ox-drawn ploughs or iron forged hoes, women planted sweet potatoes, *madumbes* (potato-like food), pumpkin, cabbage, millet, peanuts and maize. They also move to the nearby St Lucia to harvest *incema* (juncus kraussil) or special grass to weave baskets and mats. Before the forced removal the majority of the Mthiyane people at Mandlanzini did not depend on migrant labour. However, after relocation to Ntambanana this situation changed dramatically as most men were forced to leave their families for months in search for jobs far away from their homes (Interview, Sibiya 2018).

The Mandlanzini community was bound by traditional beliefs and fell under traditional authorities which were easy to identify by hereditary clans. There was finely drawn distinction between social and political structures of traditional institutions. From 1872, during the reign of

King Cetshwayo, the son of King Mpande, the Zulu Kingdom was divided into two broad systems, namely, the social system and the power of the state (Guy 1994). The social system was based on production while power of the state was based on the military. This saw the emphasis on the homestead-head (the male) or *ikhanda*, including the *inkosi*, *amakhosi*, *izinduna*, *izikhulu* and *ibandla*. These traditional structures have in due course been transformed into *isilo* (His Majesty the king), *inkosi* (chief), *induna* (headman), and *ibandla* (traditional council). Headmen had the responsibilities of being “eyes” and “ears” of *inkosi* on the ground, and this form the basis of the local authority.

### **Government Outlines as Motives for Removal**

In the nineteenth century, Colonial interest in the region was propelled by the imperial government’s interest in coal deposits on the south eastern shores of Africa (1890) and for a viable British harbour north of the Thukela River. It was Zululand Port Survey by Cathcart Metven, the harbour engineer of the Natal Government in 1902 that really drew attention to the potential of Richards Bay as the new harbour for the south east Africa (Cubbin 1997). This in the long run resulted in the establishment of a harbour which played a central role in the removal of the Mthiyane people from the area. The construction of the harbour in Richards Bay (Mandlanzini) would be used as justification for removal of more than six thousand people and above five thousand head of cattle and goats to a reserve in Ntambanana. The removal was expected to be complete before the harbour was officially opened by the Prime Minister B. J. Vorster on April 1976.

As the first industrial giant of the harbour, Alusaf earned Richards Bay the title “Aluminium City with Golden Future”. Transport Minister Ben Schoeman announced that he had no hesitation in choosing Richards Bay as the country’s next major harbour (Van der Walt 1987). It is worth noting that before the construction of the harbour and Alusaf the Mthiyane people lived in relative “harmony” with the already settled whites in the area. The establishment of an aluminium plant also contributed to the forced removal, as in 1965 the Industrial Development Cooperation had requested Swiss Aluminium Smelter to investigate the feasibility of an aluminium smelter in South Africa. An agreement for the construction of the smelter by Aluminium Safety (Alusaf) was concluded in 1966. In June 1967 the South African Government announced that the smelter would be erected at Mandlanzini. The government targeted Mandlanzini because of its economic potential, particularly its natural resources and the availability of sufficient water, which made the site ideally suitable for the needs of an aluminium smelter and harbour. The construction of a plant began in 1969. This project also demanded that the local people should be relocated to open up space for white settlement and to create an economic enclave dominated by whites.

This elucidates government curiosity in Mandlanzini. Subsequently, two successive Bantu Affairs Commissioners, namely Christopher Holmes and Tiny Jordan were tasked to begin the process of moving people from Mandlanzini. In the early months of 1970 Holmes began “negotiations”. At first, he covertly held numerous meetings with local headmen with the purpose of convincing them to persuade people to accept his proposals. He assured them that they would be moved to a “new descent and proper settlement”, called Makhathini Flats and that the government would compensate them in accordance with their loss which included revenue from their timber sales. Makhathini Flats was an irrigation settlement close to the Mozambican border (Daily News, 18 January 1971). Holmes proposals were completely rejected. The leaders and people at large felt very unsecure to move to an unknown destination.

They were totally against transportation to this unfamiliar and wild area of about 125 miles to the north.

When interviewed on 20 March 2017, Sabelo Msweli said, “Surely it was totally immoral for people who find themselves sitting on a gold mine to be dispossessed and the mine placed on other eager hands” (Interview, Msweli 2017). Reporting back to his authorities Holmes, however, misrepresented the process, claiming that “Negotiations had been friendly and there was no hint of trouble” (The Natal Mercury, 20 December 1970). The plan of moving the people had not been accomplished before Holmes was replaced by Tiny Jordan as Empangeni’s Bantu Affairs Commissioner. He was empowered by the apartheid government to give orders regarding the removal of the people from Mandlanzini. At first, he had a meeting with the chief. Jordan did not treat the chief with respect. His behaviour was considered disrespectful, and very intolerable (wearing a hat whilst addressing the chief) to the community that held the principle of *Ubuntu* (Humanity) with high esteem. Jordan was smoking and moving around while addressing the chief and this was very odd. Nevertheless, in their meeting, Jordan delivered Draconian instructions from the National Party Government. According to these orders the chief was to act as the co-ordinator between his people and the government. On behalf of the apartheid government, Jordan gave two orders: People remember these as follows: Firstly, within a period of ten days the chief and his people were to be moved from Mandlanzini to Ntambanana. Secondly, the government would provide transport, both for the people and their property including livestock.

Besides these demands, Jordan offered a number of promises or possibilities including rewards for quick positive response. Jordan could not understand Zulu language properly nor reply correctly so he could not communicate accurately with the Zulu people. He was therefore assisted by his secretary Ernest Nxumalo. The delegation from the government was escorted and protected by South African Police (SAP) and South African soldiers, and even before the meeting between Tiny and the chief a number of armed policemen were seen around Mandlanzini (Interview, Xulu 2018). This awakened the local people to an impending threat. Jordan further made a number of promises about Ntambanana including free houses and food. Schools, clinics, dams, roads, community hall, local shops and supermarket were to be built at Ntambanana. Responding to Jordan, the chief objected to the instructions. He was not prepared to sell out or alienate his people. Headmen and people at large decided that they would rather stay where they were than move to an unknown destination despite promises of free homes and work at many industries supposedly to be built at Ntambanana. For days the fear of removal hung heavy over Mandlanzini and then almost without warning the penultimate blow fell. In five days, they were told that the government trucks would come and take them away.

The clan which had occupied the land for as long as one could remember was told that it would receive compensation for the loss of revenue from the sales of timber crops and for improvements of their plots. Ominously, there was no reference to any recompense for the value of land. According to apartheid, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Chief Executive Officer of Zulu Territorial Authority, felt very strongly about the harbour. The government insisted that Buthelezi supported the construction of the harbour at Mandlanzini. The claim was made that Buthelezi believed that Zululand was in dire need of a growth point and require a harbour for their economic survival. However, in 1973, Buthelezi had publicly complained about the increase in removals. He criticised the apartheid government by saying, “We have said before that we are not prepared to co-operate with the removal of people. We don’t want to be party to the misery of our people” (Unterhalter 1987).

## DISCUSSION

### Coerced Removal, Resistance, and Life in Ntambanana

Forced removal refers to the moving of people from their homes against their will. This may not always involve physical threat or force, but sometimes coercion or other tactics against which the evictees are not in a position to challenge are employed. Methods of forcing people from areas where they were not desired included violent action (bulldozing homes, threatening people with weapons), as well as seemingly non-violent methods (spreading fear, bribing community leaders, intimidating residents, imposing unfair building restrictions as well as closing schools and stores). When people moved away from their neighbourhood as a result of non-violent action as described above, the government frequently described this movement as “voluntary”, because they were not physically threatened out of the area. This allowed the government to declare that forced removals were no longer occurring in South Africa, despite the fact that people were moving out of declared areas against their will.

The story of forced removal at Mandlanzini was not unique, as force removals in South Africa were carried out across the country by the apartheid government, especially from the 1960s to 1980s. The policy of forced removal led to some black people going to settle in the neighbouring countries either to join the armed struggle or further their struggles out of South Africa. Those who remained in the country were forced to resist the policy either through violent protest, or peaceful resistance, or other means of accommodation and resilience. The policy led to black people developing strategies of survival in the country of their birth since they were exposed to a condition of poverty, exploitation and alienation from their cultural heritage, while ensuring exclusive privileges for whites. They organised themselves and form *stokvels* or community-based saving clubs aimed at eradicating poverty where money was rotating, on monthly basis, among members (Posel 2017).

The removal at Mandlanzini was directly related to the commissioning of the harbour. In 1973 work started on the construction of a Richards Bay harbour, in the vicinity of Mandlanzini. Two years later, the 1975 consolidation plans showed Mandlanzini as one of the areas of KwaZulu to be placed under the authority of the central government. According to the apartheid government Mandlanzini was too valuable to remain in black ownership. By then the rush was on to complete the harbour in time for its official opening on 1 April 1976, when the first consignment was due to be delivered, for Japan. The removal of Mandlanzini thus needed to be carried with great speed. The chief declare in a meeting with councillors that the Mthiyane people originated at Mandlanzini during the reign of King Shaka when there were no white people in the area.

People protested against the removal. They told Jordan to ask Pretoria to reconsider its decision and allowed them to live on their land on which they were planted by God. Representatives also went to Ulundi, KwaZulu capital, to seek help, only to find that KwaZulu Government officials knew nothing about impending removal. People got an inevitable reply from Pretoria, the central government could not meet their request since Mandlanzini was a “badly situated area” and hence it had to be moved (Zululand Observer, 13 June 1975). After another short silence Jordan reappeared, this time to bring the community a copy of Government Gazette and spelt out its implications: that the Mandlanzini people no longer fell under KwaZulu but came direct under Pretoria. In this meeting the people made it clear, once more, that they did not want to move.

Jordan evaded their anger by claiming ignorance, yet earlier on he had presented orders to the chief on behalf of the central government. People remained angry, confused and apprehensive. In August 1975 headmen and some representatives went to Johannesburg to speak at the Annual Conference of the Institute of Race Relations and to state publicly their unequivocal opposition to removal (Interview, Mthimkhulu 2018). It was unfortunate that nothing effective came from that conference. The Mandlanzini community tried to resist but knowing very well that the police and soldiers were carrying lethal weapons, they decided not to use arms.

On Wednesday 6 January 1976, the axe fell at dawn in Mandlanzini, when Bantu Administration Board men supported by the South African Police, ordered residents to get out of their houses, while a demolition team went to work in a systematic destruction of their houses that had stood and sheltered them for years. Chaos broke out as people ran for their possession, carrying them towards the road. In response to this harsh treatment, some females took off their clothes to display their private parts. The front-end loader lurched mercilessly into action, lifting a shanty into the air and dropping it in a pile crumpled corrugated iron and wooden beam. Again and again it went on to demolish ten more before becoming stuck in the mud. A tractor sent to pull it also got stuck. The sullen and traumatised crowd watched and jeered. This showed that they were not taking the removal passively. This was a clear indication that they considered it immoral to dehumanise innocent people in their ancestral land. Government trucks came very early in the morning while people were asleep. Within minutes' pandemonium spread throughout the small community of Mthiyane, jolted from its sleep, as dreaded and apprehensive cries came from house to house. Some of the residents scrambled for their livestock while others tried to rescue their furniture.

Some of the houses were demolished before the contents could be removed. One person reported, "When we were removed from Mandlanzini at gunpoint, we ran away leaving most of our belonging behind, we want Mandlanzini back now" (Interview, Sokhulu 2018). Few managed to transport their cattle and other livestock and this had a negative impact on lives and livelihood of young men. Because they lost many of their cattle, it became difficult for young men lacking bride price to marry unless they found employment to help them purchase the required eleven cows. Finally, after the dust and shouting subsided, the convoy was ready. Some men rode on the back of the trucks hanging onto their belongings they had been able to salvage. Buses were provided for women and children.

The distance was 61 kilometres but it felt like a long pitiless journey during which people wept unashamedly, before they reached Ntambanana. The trucks and buses were unloaded and each family given a tiny three-roomed wooden home with a mud floor and asbestos roof. Many of these structures were so draughty that the new inhabitants had to fill up the cracks with mud. They moved their broken furniture, wondering what they had done to deserve such a humiliating treatment in the country of their forefathers. The Zululand Observer reporter took a walk through Mandlanzini after bulldozers had moved in and later wrote, "It looked like a bombed city, few citizens who remain are hounded out of their houses for not possessing permits... Hundreds sleep on veranda, living with friends in the ruin and the rains are coming" (Zululand Observer, 12 January 1976). People remained separated for months. Some, who were not at their homes when trucks came in, were left behind, forcing them to wander by foot in search of their families.

Almost everyone who could remember the forced removal which happened on 6 January 1976 of the people from Mandlanzini recalled similar memories as these of Pretty Sokhulu. During my interview with Sokhulu now in her 70s, she broke down in tears as she

recalled this fateful day almost as if it were yesterday. Sokhulu said that her people now lived in poverty and misery because of dispossession detachment from their ancestral land. She remembered an idyllic life in Mandlanzini where there was plenty of food and in her words “people were not sick” (Interview, Sokhulu 2018). Although they lived a subsistence-farming lifestyle, everyone, when asked, acknowledged that they were healthy because they were eating fresh food direct from the soil. At that time, of course, diseases like Human Immunodeficiency Virus were not known at Mandlanzini. The issue of graves became one of the most devastating aspects of the people’s removal from Mandlanzini as was with other apartheid era forced removals. The abrupt removal of the people left them with no time to conduct proper rituals for their ancestors’ spirits.

At resettlement areas in general, the reality differs from what people were promised. Living conditions and the provision of public services in resettlement areas were dismal (Interview, Msweli 2017). This happened in resettlement areas like Ntambanana, Sabokwe and in Dukuduku. Due to the shortage of job opportunities and the fact that social grants were often not paid in the homelands, the survival of many families depended on subsistence farming. However, tenure in most homelands areas was communal and local chiefs decide who could cultivate it (Sharp and Spiegel 1985). Resettled people had little chance to obtain arable land, partly because land was scarce and relatively infertile and also because resettled people were perceived by the local people to have stolen their children’s land. The situation was exacerbated that people in resettlement areas were not allowed to own livestock except fowls. Due to the lack of economic opportunities, many men and women had to migrate for many months each year to work in mines or in the cities as domestic workers. In resettlement areas people were not allowed to own land or to use it all.

There is huge difference between Mandlanzini and Ntambanana. One basic example is that Mandlanzini was adjacent to the sea and Ntambanana is in the interior. Mandlanzini has high economic potential and capabilities because of its fertile soil, abundant trees, long grass and rich crops which easily support a large population. This is in contrast to the desolate landscape of Ntambanana. Whereas in Mandlanzini there is a great Mzingazi Lake supporting the entire community with clean fresh water, in the arid Ntambanana there is no water. Since Mandlanzini was located along the coast, heavy rainfall was very common. In comparison, there is very little or no rainfall at Ntambanana. In contrast with huge grazing fields at Mandlanzini, the hilly Ntambanana had no worthwhile grazing land. Based on these differences, it became clear that the removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini to Ntambanana was an example of blatant apartheid exploitation of people. The government did not even deliver its promises at Ntambanana.

Resettlement at Ntambanana had elements of cooperation and conflict. It led to the formation of new networks but simultaneously stirred violence. Prevalence of economic hardship and crime appeared to have facilitated the formation of new relationships. Research conducted at Ntambanana shows that people often depended on informal networks of borrowing and support in the community (Interview, Sokhulu 2018). Conflict, however, manifested itself much stronger than cooperation. The local people of the area began to attack the newcomers for taking over their land leading to endemic violence. Crime, in particular cattle theft, was rife. This cattle theft got out of hand when the local police deemed it too dangerous to control these areas that were ruled by gangs living off stock theft. The national government had little incentives to interfere.

A conflict-ridden relationship developed between the new settlers and the original community which was falsely presented as part of violence affecting the province. It was not

too long before tension broke out between Biyela (chief of Ntambanana) and Mthiyane (chief of Mandlanzini). This conflict was centred on territorial dispute. According to Biyela the new arrivals occupied the land illegally. Biyela insisted that the area belonged to his ancestors and not to Mthiyane people. In the mid-1980s, tension between the two leaders soon engulfed the people and led to violent clashes. During the early 1990s the party political conflict between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) disrupted peace process at Ntambanana. A number of people in the area, including those who were innocent like children and elders, were killed and house were burnt. The prestige and power of chief Mthiyane declined and an unknown group of people attempted to kill him (Interview, Mthiyane 2017).

A concerned group which became known as the Mandlanzini Crisis Committee under the leadership of Selby Mthiyane was formed in 1990. The majority of its members were young and educated. Selby told his followers that time has arrived to voice their grievance. He promised to emancipate the Mthiyane people from the terrible plight brought on them by the apartheid government. These young zealots, however, were not working hand in hand with chief Mthiyane. Some of them regarded chief Mthiyane as a sell-out and a collaborator. According to Selby, it was fruitless to involve him because he was too old and inactive. It is worth noting that the driving force behind the restitution claim was not the chief but political activists. An unintended outcome of the forced removal was that the Mthiyane people were cut off from their traditional leader, the chief, and his headman who for undisclosed reason decided to settle at eSikhaleni (township near Richards Bay). The Mandlanzini Crisis Committee was soon regarded as an affiliate of the ANC. It is also alleged that the ANC supported it financially. Moreover, some of its members were regarded as activists of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Consequently, some members of the Mthiyane community did not associate themselves with the committee. Those members were then declared to be Inkatha's affiliates. This divided the Mthiyane people.

As a result of these divergent political allegiances (ANC and IFP) yet another committee was formed. As compared to the first one, this one was poorly organised and not really strong. Most of its members were not educated, unpopular, and not well known in political circles. Nevertheless, they worked enthusiastically and at the end formed part of the groups that returned to Mandlanzini. Despite these two antagonistic committees, there were also neutral people, mostly evangelical Christians, who did not associate themselves with neither of the two committees. These people decided to remain at Ntambanana. They followed Mthiyane and disapproved violent and radical actions.

### **Return to Mandlanzini**

The Mandlanzini case is considered as one of the first land restitution cases in South Africa. The claim, like many of its kind dates back to the period before the first democratic elections of 1994. With the advent of the first free elections and the drive for reconciliation, people began manoeuvring to regain control of their land with the thought of improving their livelihood as well. In 1993, a year before the passing of the Restitution Act through Parliament, the Mandlanzini Crisis Committee formed the Mandlanzini Interim Committee later renamed Mandlanzini Development Committee (MDC), in an effort to negotiate for the return of their ancestral land. They held negotiations with the then newly formed municipal structure, the Richards Bay Transitional Local Council (RB TLC) which represented municipal authorities of Richards Bay (Interview, Msweli 2017).

Richards Bay had in the meantime evolved into a thriving seaport town, with the biggest deep-sea harbour and the biggest aluminium smelter in the world. Given the comprehensive development on much of the claimed land, the MDC realized that restoration (that is physical restitution) of their ancestral land was not realistic. Consequently, the MDC on behalf of its constituents and with historical reference to a holly tree and ancestral graves claimed the area between the airfield and Lake Mzingazi (Interview, Mthiyane 2017). The claim proposed a resettlement of the claimant population in combination with subsistence and commercial agriculture. Integrated Planning Services (IPS) was given the task of supervising the further but orderly implementation of the resettlement project.

In 1994 preparations for resettlement started with the pegging of the settlement plots. The first fifty families arrived in the course of 1995. The first erected houses were simple shacks. Vegetable gardens were demarcated and shortly afterwards the first crops were planted (mainly vegetables and stable crops like maize). In contravention of the restrictions, livestock was introduced. By 1996, two large herds were to be found grazing freely in the Mandlanzini area. Later on more and more cattle came in. Since communal grazing land was neither available nor had been accounted for in the planning, and no feed and fodder crops were purchased or grown, cattle increasingly ventured into the predominantly suburbs of Richards Bay: Birdswood and Meer-en-see. A number of complaints by the dismayed town folk soon featured in the local newspaper, the Zululand Observer.

The settlement scenario at Mandlanzini unfolded in a way that was not foreseen in the initial agreement. This showed that the proposal for an agri-village was reworked and redesigned according to people's perspective. Besides the "cattle question", the five staged settlement process was clearly not being implemented. Families came and settled as they saw fit. Moreover, most plots were subdivided into three to four smaller plots as an alternative strategy for deriving income from the urban settlement. Houses were built on these smaller plots and rented out to tenants many of whom were probably not listed beneficiaries. In a testimony to the rising economy vibrancy of this urban periphery, the shacks from the first phase settlement were almost all replaced by new brick houses and some of them were upgraded to bungalows. Some plot owners moved to the nearby settlement of eSikhaleni whilst subletting their houses to newcomers.

Mandlanzini today show how land restitution has provided a vehicle for a community to create and recreate a landscape. The landscape appears fragmented; divided between urban-style concerns and rural ones. Certain elements of the landscape reflect how the area has been integrated into the urban economy and lifestyle. The subdivision of plots and the subletting of houses have produced the imaginary of a township. The withered state of the vegetable gardens indicates that wages have been substituted for the production of food. In their turn supermarkets have been assigned a major role in the supply of food. This urban landscape converges with the lifestyle of youth, who have no interest in living like "traditionalist subjects" whose livelihood and dignity depend upon the ability to maintain a healthy stock of cattle and goats. For them restitution was a forward-looking affair rather than one evoking the past.

Other elements of landscape, however, indicate that the elderly generation sees a possibility to continue their rural lifestyle. The most visible indicator is the key role that cattle play in Mandlanzini. Many families (especially elders) own and keep cattle. To the group of elderly men, the Mandlanzini claim does not imply a break with the past (in contrast to the younger generation); it rather reflects an element of cultural continuity. When the shortage of feed and fodder was pointed, some cattle committee members responded by saying "there is enough grass and water behind Alusaf" (the ground for aluminium plant). This statement

resonates with proposal first suggested in 1998: that new ancestral claims on land nearby would resolve the issue of limited grazing. Although the prospects for new pastures were limited given that the land was poisoned and unsuitable for grazing in the short term, and that there was difficulty in finding herd boys to exploit distant soils, elders continue to dream about the Great Zulu tradition of cattle and pastures. This was supported by the fact that these elders enjoyed much prestige and had discursive means to connect their dreams of a “traditionalist lifestyle” to contemporary restitution options.

## CONCLUSION

The removal of the Mthiyane people from Mandlanzini is a sad story. It disrupted their political and socio-economic lifestyle. Like many other communities elsewhere, for example Dukuduku, Bhenghazi and Sabokwe, the Mthiyane people were not just submissive but they fought, in vain, to remain free in the land that was undoubtedly theirs. From the trauma, many now wonder whom they are, having lost connection to their ancestral land for such a long time. The National Party Government, however, justified itself by saying that the forced removal of the Mthiyane people would benefit the entire nation because development would include the construction of industries, which would create jobs for all elements of South African society. Of course, today the land that once represented homes, livelihood and security for many now has many booming industries and neat suburbs of modern houses occupied by individuals who historically have few ties to the area. The area they lived in is now Birdswood, wildeweide, Veldenvlei, Arboretum, Meer-en-see, Brackenham and Aquadene, just to mention a few. It is also true that Richards Bay is today one of the fast developing industrial cities in South Africa, however, historical judgements should not be made based on the present but from the past.

## REFERENCES

- Baldwin, A. (1975). Removal and separate development. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1, 215-227.
- Butler, J. (1977). *The black homelands of South Africa: The political and development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Publishers.
- Cubbin, A. E. (1997). *The history of Richards Bay 1897-1970s*. Empangeni: Empangeni Printers.
- Daily News*, ‘Zulus to get compensation for moving’, 18. 01.1971.
- Desmond, C. (1971). *The discarded people*. London: Penguin Press.
- Durban Bureau*, ‘Apartheid in action’, 19. 12.1970.
- Horrel, M. (1973). *The African homelands of South Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race relations.  
<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=umhlathuze+municipality>.  
Accessed 10. 04. 2020.
- Kelk Manger, A., & Malaudzi, M. (2011). Popular response to apartheid: 1948-1975. In Ross, A. (ed.). *Cambridge history of South Africa* (2-28). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mabin, A. (1992). Comprehensive segregation: The origins of Group Act and its apparatuses. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18 (2), 401- 438.
- Manson, A., & Laurance, M. The dogs of the boers: The rise and fall of Lucas Mangope in Bophuthatswana. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20 (3), 422-521.
- Masoga, M. A. and Shokane A. L. (2020). Socio-economic challenges faced by traditional healers in Limpopo province of South Africa: conversation from below. *An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. AlterNative 1-8.

- McDowel, W. H. (2002) *Historical research: A guide*. London: Longman.
- Miller, J. (2016). *The African volk: The apartheid regime and its search for survival*. USA: Oxfam University Press.
- Msweli, S., Oral evidence, KwaMbonambi, 20. 08. 2017.
- Mthimkhulu, R., Personal interview, Ntambanana, 16. 09. 2018.
- Mthiyane, T., Personal interview, Richards Bay, 6. 08. 2017.
- Natras, N., & Seekins, I. (2011). *The economy and poverty in the twentieth century*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pilgel, J. (2007). *Freedom next time: Resisting the empire*. New York: Nations Book.
- Platzky, L., & Walker, C. (eds.) (1984). *Surplus People*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Posel, D. The apartheid project 1948-1970. In Ross (ed.) (2011). *Cambridge history of South Africa* (316- 345). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rand Daily Mail*, 'Mandlazi: a bombed city', 19. 12. 1970.
- Sharp, J., & Spiegel, A. (1985). Vulnerability to impoverishment to South African rural areas: The erosion neighbourhood as a social resource. *Africa* 55 (2), 4-26.
- Sibiya, M., Oral evidence, Mambuka, 10. 06. 2018.
- Sokhulu, P., Oral evidence, Mandlazi, 10. 05. 2018.
- Sokhulu, S., Oral evidence, Empangeni, 17. 02. 2018.
- The Natal Mercury*, 'Peaceful negotiations', 20. 12. 1970.
- Unterhalter, C. (1987). *Forced removals: The division, segregation and control of people of South Africa*. London: International Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa.
- Van der Walt, J. C. (1987). *The wonder of Richards Bay 1897-1970s*. Richards Bay: Richards Baai Sakekamer.
- Wilson, F., & Ramphela, M. (1989). *Uprooting poverty in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip.
- Xulu, M., Oral evidence, KwaMthethwa, 17. 06. 2018.
- Zululand Observer*, 'Removals at Richards Bay', 12. 01. 1976.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

### **HEBERT SIHLE NTULI**

Department of History,  
Faculty of Arts,  
University of Zululand,  
KwaDlangezwa Campus, South Africa.  
NtuliH@unizulu.ac.za

### **ZUMISILE FELICITY Nhlenyama**

Department of History,  
Faculty of Arts,  
University of Zululand,  
KwaDlangezwa Campus, South Africa.  
zumisilen@gmail.com