



Time Travel, Tin Town, Gamalakhe, October 1968

Facts

South Africa moved more and more into apartheid and race discrimination after the National Party came into power 1948. The Group Areas Act from 1950 assigned the racial groups to different residential and business areas. Blacks, coloured and Indians were excluded from living in the most developed areas. They were forcibly removed if they lived in the "wrong" area and had to settle in a township, often far away from work and services. Non-whites also had to carry passbooks to enter the 'white' parts of the country.

There were both non-violent and violent protests against the segregation and lack of human rights. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 when 69 persons were killed in a protest march made the ANC start an armed wing of the struggle, Umkhonto we Sizwe. ANC and PAC were banned in 1960 and in 1962 Nelson Mandela was taken prisoner, accused to be a terrorist. 1964 he was sent to Robben Island.

The Black Consciousness Movement emerged in the mid 1960s, which brought more solidarity amongst black groups and a new sense of pride.

The Freedom Charter from 1955 was made the core principles for ANC and calls for democracy, human rights, land reform etc. It was now and then circulated in the underground.

Gamalakhe

In the Port Shepstone/ Margate region, a settlement for the blacks was established far away from the coast. The township was called Gamalakhe, after a former Mavandla chief and it was under Zulu government jurisdiction. Some of the families living in the Gamalakhe area were moved inland to make room for the new township.

People were moved from many places on the coast, from Masinenge at Margate, Komiti, Umbango, Marburg, Albersville and other places, to the new township. Often they had to move from their place at very short notice. The stuff they had was put on a truck and taken away. The first people came to Gamalakhe in mid 1968. At that time there was nothing, no electricity, water, toilets, services, schools, streets etc. The people were just offloaded at the house where they were going to stay.

The oldest area in Gamalakhe had a lot of small tin houses and was called Tin Town. One of the small houses was used as a church, for several congregations- Bantu Methodists, Church of England and Catholics. The first school was built in 1971, before that the children had to walk to a school in Albersville, almost 20 ks. The first clinic came in the mid 1970s.

There were no jobs in Gamalakhe. People tried to find jobs in town or at the coast, as servants, gardeners, cooks or in the quarries. There was one transport to town in the morning and one back in the evening. Black persons were not allowed in the white areas

The tin houses were supposed to be temporary houses but became permanent for most people for over 20 years.

This was a very sensitive period in South African history. The government was afraid of protests. No meetings were allowed. If the police found people in groups or crowds they would be arrested. The secret police, the special branch, was active everywhere. Newspapers were not allowed in the townships. Persons that were seen as suspicious were victimized and intimidated.

Memela family

The small Memela family, consisting of a single mother, Bonnie, and her two children, Smangele 13 and Stumo 9, was moved from Albersville to Tin Town, Gamalakhe in October 1968. One morning people came knocking on their door in Albersville and they were told to leave immediately, together with 2-3 other families. They were moved to house number 258 in Tin Town, Gamalakhe. In Albersville Blacks, Indians and some Whites were living together. Now it was turned into an Indian area and all the Black houses were demolished. The Memelas were Catholics and became active in the small church close to their new house in Tin Town. The tin house they lived in was very small but soon another family came and the Memelas had to share their house with this new family arriving from Albersville.

Scenario,

New families are moving into Tin Town, Gamalakhe, October 1968

The truck came early in the morning to their homes in Albersville. A man shouted out the names of the families that had to leave, Molefe, Daki, Sima, Mguni, and he said the number of their houses in the new place. Then they were told to leave within an hour. There were no opportunities for protests. Collect your stuff and do it fast, they were told. All the stuff was put on the truck. Some did not have time to get all their belongings. Then the truck drove away, with all the goods and the families, men, women and children on board. People are still not quite aware of what is happening. Everything went so fast. Why do we have to leave our house? Where are we going?

When arriving in Gamalakhe the families on the truck are looking astonished and increasingly worried. Is this the place where we are going to live? So far away from town. How can we survive here? No work, no shops, no schools, no streets. They feel frustration and some of them anger. They see children running around, women doing the laundry, older persons sitting silent. The truck driver is looking for the house for the Memela family, house nr 258. Where is it?

Key Questions

- How can we survive in Gamalakhe – no shops, no work, no transport, no electricity, no schools, no clinic, no nothing? Can we improve the conditions?
- Why are we discriminated? Can we do anything about it?
- How can we live together? In the small Tin houses? In Tin Town together with people we don't know?

Roles

The learners and their teachers are the (three/ four) families moving into Gamalakhe. The leaders are the people already living in Tin Town.

Activities

- Unload the truck
- Clean the tin house, sweep floor, dust the walls/ roof, clean windows (Penny)
- Furnish the tin house, fold curtains, a dividing sheet, beds (Tina)
- Do the laundry (Ah, Penny)
- Clean the garden with rakes, spades, wheelbarrow (Sipho)
- Make a bed for vegetables (spinach, cabbage) (Teboho)
- Children games – 3tins, amagendi (Thula)
- Cook food, isigwama-putto and fino, maas, mahewe, tea, bread/ biscuits (Smangele, Helen)
- Make a bench for the church (Mhlope)
- Collect water?

Time plan

- 07.30 Prepare the site
- 09.00 The students arrive
 - Dress up, names,
 - Repetition of facts and scenario, rules
- 09.30 Initiation, new families on the truck
 - The truck is coming to house nr 258, unload (those living in the house tell what to do)
- 09.45 Activities
- 10.15 Tea, whispering discussions (newspaper, freedom charter), song
- 10.45 Activities continue (Special branch)
- 11.25 Meal, story, whispering discussions, newspaper, song, (dance)
- 12.00 Local policemen/security arrive
 - Reflection
- 12.30 Students leave

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