



Time Travel, Lwandle 1986

Facts

South Africa was in the mid-1980s a country of conflicts and a strong regulated apartheid system. The ethnic groups were divided and assigned in different residential and business areas. Blacks had to carry pass books to enter the 'white' parts for work. In the afternoon, they went back to their homes. Only their labour was welcomed in the white areas.

Many moved to the urban regions looking for jobs. In the outskirts of the cities hostels were constructed for black male, migrant workers.

There were several uprisings from 1984-1986, boycotts and protests, which led to the Government declaring State of Emergency in 1986. The police had the authority to use almost any kinds of means to “handle” the situation.

Lwandle

Lwandle was a “native location” to accommodate black male migrant workers. The idea was to support work places and industries in the urban region with employees and to have control over the male workers. A buffer zone separated the location from other areas. The hostels started to be built in the late 1950s and were intended for 960 men. Most of the men came from Eastern Cape and Transkei. Once a year, after eleven months, they were able to go home to their families for four weeks.

Only those men who had a pass book and a contract from the employer were allowed to stay in the hostels. No men under the age of 18, no women and children were allowed. The police made regular check-ups, most every day, to check pass books and that nobody stayed there illegally.

In the mid-1980s Lwandle had developed a lot. About 3000 men, women and children were staying in the hostels, many of them illegally. The conditions in the hostels were very bad, overcrowding, no privacy, poor sanitation and toilets (buckets). It was difficult to keep it clean and disgusting, filthy toilets. The social life had severe constraints, the police raids made life difficult. Many were afraid to raise their voice and protest, scared to end up in jail, detained for an unknown period of time. Anyway, in the hostels strong friendships often developed and people tried to live a more “normal” life. The harsh situation was interrupted by parties and gatherings, especially in the weekends.

1986 the Hostel Dwellers Association was formed in Lwandle to improve living conditions, upgrading of the houses including building family houses, set up a mobile clinic, build a school and a crèche in Lwandle and end the hated contract system of labor. An estimation was made that 500 children lived in the hostels. The government threatened to arrest those who expressed their opinions and officially no women and children lived in Lwandle. But it could

not stop the secret meetings and actions. In 1987 the first illegal crèche and school started in some small shacks in spite of the threats.

Some of the members and supporters of the Hostel Dwellers Association wore a T-shirt with a drawing of a nice house and the text: "Unite families! Away with Apartheid."

Policemen had regular check-ups of the hostels. They could come any time, daytime or nighttime. When the people saw them coming the warning was passed on all over the hostels. Normally one person called out "Kubomvu" ("its Red") which meant danger. Those who stayed illegal, women and children, tried to run away or to hide under beds or in cupboards. Very often people were arrested, taken away and detained. Often women disguised dressed up in men's clothing, big shirts, trousers and shoes, when they were outside or went to the toilets.

Bulelwa Sophia Mtshizana

Mma Mtshizana was born in Aberdeen 1939. She got a job in the 1950s in Strand as a domestic worker. She met the ten year older Wellington Mtshizana, Tata, who worked as a petrol boy in Strand. Tata stayed in a hostel 38 in Lwandle. They fell in love and Sophia moved into his hostel. Some years later they moved to a room/ compartment in hostel 33 and they married. Within some years they had five children, four boys and one daughter, who all grew up in the hostel. The first born and the last born passed away after some years and they were left with three children. They also had a dog called Boet.

Mma Mtshizana often had part-time jobs and stayed in Strand for the weekdays. At Friday nights she came home to her husband and children. Tata worked at Gants factory and also sold meat at the hostel. Often there was a table outside of the hostel where visiting people could by and eat.

There was no school for the children in Lwandle, not until the illegal shack school started in 1987.

Mma remembers several police raids, day or night, once the hostel was surrounded by policemen with guns. People were often scared to be arrested and detained. But she also remembers birthday parties, singing and dancing.

Hostel 33

In the mid-1980s about 30 persons lived in hostel 33, 12 men, 10 women and 9 children. Some of the couples were married; some men had a spouse in Lwandle and a wife in Transkei. The number constantly changed, people moved in and out, sometimes the police arrested one or two. In the weekends there were more people because of visitors and relatives from near-by.

Scenario, Hostel 33 in Lwandle 1986

Mma Bulelwa Sophia Mtshizana in hostel 33 has her 47th birthday. This will be celebrated by those who live in the hostel but also some friends are coming.

It's Sunday afternoon. As always in the weekends many people are at the hostels. Women and children are visiting their husbands and fathers. But everybody knows that by 7 in the evening all visiting people must have left, all illegal persons, men under the age of 18, women and children. The police will arrive and check. If you don't have a passport and are illegally staying in the hostels you will be arrested.

Mma Mtshizana hasn't had the time to prepare for any visiting guests. As usual she arrived in the hostel on Friday night after a week of hard work. On Saturday she socialized with husband and children; did some laundry and some shopping. The guests, arriving for the birthday party on Sunday afternoon have to help with cleaning and washing, repair a broken bench and other chores.

It's a lot of tension and frustration in the hostels. The residential conditions are disgusting. Overcrowded, no private space and filthy toilets. No clinic, not even a school or a crèche. The Hostel Dwellers Association has started with meetings to protest and negotiate, for better houses, family houses, a school and not least to end the hated contract labor system and apartheid. But who dares to join them and go to the meetings? And those who go to the meetings are very secretive. You never know who to trust. Many wonder if it ever will be better conditions in Lwandle.

At a birthday party you talk to friends, listen to music, play games, sing, eat and drink. But many also want to talk about possible ways to make life better, maybe even protest and prepare for actions. One or two have heard some protest songs and want to teach the others. But do we dare to sing them and discuss actions? What happens if the police arrive?

Roles

The participants are guests coming to the Mma Mitshizana's birthday

The leaders are those persons living in hostel nr 33.

Policeman/ Special guards

Key Questions

- What do we say about the living conditions in our hostels? What are the biggest problems? How can we make it better? What actions can we take?
- How can we make life better for each other, living in this small space? How can we support each other, young and old?

Activities

- Clean, sweep the floor
- Do laundry
- Set up a curtain
- Make beds?
- Mending some clothes
- Repairing a bench
- Make mugs with jam tins and wire.
- Prepare the cake and coffee/ tea
- Prepare the table, a present/ gift
- Boardgames, Umrabaraba, Draft
- Singing, protest song plus “Asingomama LobeBhala lencwadi, Xa binguMama ngethe Dear sana lwam”

Time Plan

- 15.00 Background to the Time Travel method
- 15.15 The history and scenario
Clothes, Characters
Rules
- 15.45 Time Travel starts
Initiation
Activities
Tea and cake
Songs
- 16.45 Time Travel ends
Reflection at the museum
- 17.15 Learners leave
Evaluation with adults
- 17.45 End

22 October 2011

Ebbe Westergren, Helen Eklund, Kalmar County Museum, Sweden

Lunga Smile, Lwandle Migrant Labor Museum,

Based on the story of Bulelwa Sophia Mtshizana, former residence of Hostel 33 and currently a residence and a senior member of Lwandle community.

Roles (25 persons, like 8 living in the hostel and 17 visitors?)

Mma Mtshizana – the daughter Ellen Nomathamsonga

Tata Mtshizana – Ebbe?

Children, two boys and one daughter, of Mtshizanas (*names*) – Drama persons?

Other adults living in the hostel (*names*) – Helen, Louis, Lunga

Children living in the hostel?

Visiting persons – learners (10), adults (7)

Visiting elderly – Mma Mtshizana

Policemen – Drama persons?

Rolecards for some adult visitors

Props and clothes

Any clothes/ symbols from 1986?

Everybody bring 1986 clothes

Parts of a police uniform?

Clean, sweep the floor – two brooms, dust/ polish cloths

Do laundry – laundry, water, basin/ buckets/enamel pots, soap, string, pegs

Make the beds?

Set up a certain – sheet, string, needles and thread

Mending some clothes – clothes, needle, thread

Repairing a bench – broken bench, hammers, nails, pieces of wood

Make mugs with jam tins and wire -

Prepare the cake and coffee/ tea – primus stove, a big tea/ coffee pot, water, tea/ coffee, cups, sugar, milk, spoons, kitchen towels

Decorate the table and birthday cake – table, table cloth, cake, plates, knife, candles, flowers, paper decorations?

Boardgames, Umrabaraba, Draft – 2-3 boards, marks

Prepare a present/ gift (photo, dress)

Newspaper, T-shirt, passport?

Singing -