

Project: Displaced Lives Collection

Interviewee: Gladys Thomas (G)

Interviewer: Sean Field (S)

Date: /12/2009

Location: Ocean View, Cape Town

2 Wav files (1:22:21 & 1.09 mins)

Transcribed by: Jane van der Riet

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Wav file 1

<1:22:21>

S: Alright. How're you doing today, Gladys?

G: I'm fine thank you.

S: Ok, tape recorder's on. Um see how – thanks very much at long last, we get to – talk.

G: It's a pleasure.

S: [laughs]

G: Mm.

S: Um. Let me just start like we always start. Um, tell me, where where were you born?

G: Oh um, I was born in Salt River -

S: Mm.

G: - near Cape Town.

S: And when when was that Gladys?

G: That was in 1934.

<1:21:52>

S: And um, and do you mind telling me your birthday?

G: [laughs] You gonna give me a present?

S: [laughing]

G: Um 19- Fourteenth of December 1934.

S: 1934, Sjoe.

G: Ah.

S: And um – your – and h- how long did you live in Salt River, just to give me a idea?

G: I stayed in Salt River until I was age 6.

S: Ja.

G: And then um, my mother uh my father took me –

<1:21:23>

S: Mm.

G: - to live with his family so I went to live in Lakeside.

S: Ok.

G: Mm.

S: In 19 – and that happened in 1940.

G: Mm.

S: So do you have memories of of of Salt River?

G: Always have memories of Salt River because it was such a crowd staying together.

S: Ja?

G: It was almost like an apartment block.

S: Hm!

G: With all the different families.

S: Sjoe.

G: So um ... now and then, when a- as I said I moved away when I was six. And I could never, I was never allowed to go back again.

S: Mm?

G: Because the – there was some sort of a [soft scraping noise in background] um ... there was some sort of conflict between the two families. Because my father was married and he had me by my mother.

<1:20:42>

S: Hah! Ok, you mentioned that before.

G: Mm.

S: Um, but do you – do you mind explaining w- the the situation with your p-parents again?

G: Well my f- father he was 64 when I was born. My mother was 34.

S: Wow.

G: And he was coloured.

S: Mm.

G: She was Irish.

S: Ok.

G: When she became too familiar with all the coloured families around here, her family rejected her.

S: Sjoe.

<1:20:18>

G: And with the result that my my my father then ... uh took me and he took me to his family. And it he had a whole lot of problems there. With the result that I had to go and live there. And I was never allowed then – my my mother's name was never mentioned in that family.

S: Sjoe.

G: In my father's family.

S: Sjoe.

G: So um – but I uh uh his wife. She was a old lady. She had ten children. Ten children she had from him. That's h- eh that's his children too – from his married wife. So I now come there, *soos 'n indringetjie!* [laughs] And um ... my mother's name wasn't mentioned and then I also couldn't see my mother and she only stayed in Salt River and this was a few stations away [laughing].

S: Mm.

G: And they were so – against their father, with his – mistress. That it was a sort of a f- you had to avoid even the issue of. And I believe that my mothers' mother came to see him once. He owned a blacksmith in Lakeside. He was quite well off, hey. And he owned a blacksmith in Lakeside and she came to see him, I dunno over what.

S: Mm.

G: Over her daughter, my mother. And then the family found out. Then it was a whole fighting and going on in the house again.

<1:18:48>

S: Sjoe.

G: So anyway I stayed there until I met ... a I ... ja I stayed there and then I um ... I went to school from there, went to Dutch Reform school, in Retreat. And we had to walk you know. From Lakeside to Retreat.

S: Sjoe.

G: Today the children get driven around to school and picked up and they such a lot of spoilt brats today.

S: Mm.

G: Anyway the um – I stayed there and then – uh one of the sons married a – somebody. And this daughter-in-law, new daughter-in-law in the family, she was very ... envious. I think she was envious of me because I was very um – I had light hair like my mother. And then she – she was cruel too. And ... was even against the family's wishes, she um made me go and work over the road with some Jewish family, to look after the children and all that. And in any case after that I ended up after standard, what did I was in standard – standard six? That time they – our girls didn't bother much with education like today.

S: Mm.

G: Because it was said that your husband must go and work for you. You mustn't work. Your husband must work for you[laughing]. So I went to standard six and then after standard six I went to work in a sweet factory. And then I went to work in a shirt factory. And then I met Albert. And then I left that house. And I went to live in Simonstown.

<1:17:11>

S: SJoe. When when was that?

G: That was in n- end of fif- 19 – think it was '50. I was 16 I think. Fif- ja. Somewhere around there.

S: SJoe.

G: So that's the end of Lakeside. I never s- bothered with Lakeside again.

S: And let me just check something. So your your father's family was in Lakeside?

G: Mm.

S: And your mother's family was in -

G: Salt River -

S: [simultaneously] Salt River -

G: - yes.

S: Right. That's what I thought you -

G: Mm.

S: And and going back to Salt River, um – the ... wha- well what did your – tell me a bit about your mother's side of the family. Maybe, just give me -

G: I never knew my mother's side of the family, because they rejected her. She just had all these friends living around with her in her flat.

<1:16:33>

S: Mm.

G: In this massive flat. And and – and she uh ... her mother used to come and visit her now and again. My grandmother. They immigrated from Ireland when she was a little girl I think.

S: Mm.

G: And um, she used to complain, to my mother, about why she getting so involved with this – coloured people and so on.

S: Mm.

G: And that's about all I know from my mother's family. And at the age of six, when I left I never saw it again.

S: SJoe.

G: So I can't speak much about – living in Salt River.

- S: Mm. And that was just before you went to school? Um, that you moved to your -
- G: Ja -
- S: - father's place? <1:15:51>
- G: Ja. Ja. My father took, they put me in school immediately.
- S: Immediately.
- G: Mm.
- S: Ja.
- G: So um ja, that's that's the Salt River episode.
- S: Ja.
- G: And then I went to live in Lakeside with Albert.
- S: Ja.
- G: He found a place for me to board. And uh ... oh and then I worked in a factory in in in Wynberg, shirt factory, MONATIC.
- S: Mm.
- G: And uh and even when I stayed in Simonstown, I still went to go and work there, at this factory. Because the - coloured girls at that time wanted to – I wanted to be a nurse, I always wanted to be a nurse. Because I I liked [laughing] I mean I liked the – the nurses wore big beautiful veils, you know. <1:15:09>
- S: Mm.
- G: I liked the veils [laughing]. Or a nurse or you could o- either be a nurse or you could learn for the teacher.
- S: Mm.
- G: But you must remember at that time the white – only white young ladies got jobs as shop assistants and so on. And our girls had to either work in a factory or – a domestic work.
- S: Mm.
- G: So that's how I started in the factory.
- S: Sjoe.
- G: Ja.
- S: So what did you do in the factory?
- G: Oh, it was a shirt factory. It um ... I what did I do? Oh I examined the ch- the shirts to see if its, if its good enough to go down to the ironing, to the ironers.

S: Mm.

G: Because it was a posh shirt factory, MONATIC [radio and child singing in background].

S: Mm.

<1:14:26>

G: And I think they still, they still busy today making shirts.

S: Mm.

G: They somewhere in Salt River, but this was in Wynberg. Opposite Wynberg Station. They had a old – broken down old building there. But they made the most beautiful shirts. And uh the owner of m- of MONATIC, afterwards owned TEJ's. TEJ in in ... Towes, Edgar, Jacobs -

S: Ok.

G: - they were the owners. So that's my factory – episode. [Laughs]

S: [Laughing] Ja. And tell me I mean eh tell me about your schooling? I mean, do you -

G: Oh my schooling, my schooling wasn't very exciting. Although I used to um ... there was quite a – I had a lot of friends. And the ... people were very into colour that time, and because I was very fair ... I was now such a ... something like a a almost like a ... a the ... the boys and the girls of the school there where I went to, it was a Dutch Reform School [voices shouting in the distant background] in on Main Road Retreat. And the boys and the girls ... they always wanted to – have me in their games. And I must play and so on. My school there was quite a exciting time. It's a pity I had to leave. At at at standard six.

S: Sjoe.

G: Ja. So um ... but most of our girls – of of my age left. The they you were – actually educated when you left standard six [laughing].

S: Hm.

<1:12:52>

G: Not like today, God. Can't even have a matric today, you not educated yet.

S: Mm.

G: So uh that's my my life story until my school days. And now myself and Albert got married. And I lived in – I lived with uh one of the old man's sons. He had a house in Lakeside uh in um Wynberg. I went to live there, he was a architect'. He was one of the only only coloured architects in the Cape Peninsular. Rupert Adams. He's he he ... he drew the plans for that house they had in Lakeside.

S: Mm.

G: Because it was a very beautiful house. Massive house. As I said, our old man was well-off.

S: Mm.

G: And he could afford to p- have a house like that built. That time there wasn't a lot of cars like today. Horse and – he used to build those – you know the carts or vegetable carts?

S: Mm hm hm hm?

G: And the horse shoes they used to make. Blacksmith he had, my father. My biological father.

S: Mm.

G: And then uh this son of his was a architect'. And he um ... he bu- he drew the plan for that lovely house here. And the house was facing that way, and it was named 'Opgaande son'. [Laughs] On the Main Road. We were right on the Main Road.

<1:11:32>

S: Mm.

G: Ja.

S: Sjoie. What was your mom's name and your dad's name?

G: My mom's name is – she was a Miss Craythorne.

S: Mm.

G: Craythorne. And I see there's just a few Craythorne's in a phone book. When I look. Look once in a phone book to see if there's there's a it's a small – small family.

S: Mm hm.

G: Craythorne. And my father's surname was Adams. Adams and Craythorne. Adams is a very popular - surname amongst the ... the coloureds.

S: Mm hm.

G: They were they were two brothers. They came from Paarl. And Paarl had a blacksmith's. And he came to p- open his business here, in Lakeside -

S: Hm mm -

G: - because there was a – the council was near. You know, the Divisional Council. And also Council's had a horses.

<1:10:43>

S: Mm hm.

G: To collect dirt and things. And that's how he got so well-off. Because he opened a blacksmith right where he could make the shoes for the ... for the ... Municipal, and all that. The office's still there in Lakeside where the train passes there. The council offices where they had all these horses.

S: Hm.

G: Ja.

S: Sjoie. Do you have any idea how your mom and dad met?

G: Man, I don't – she was so young still. I don't know how wh- wh- No, I don't know how they met. I know she used to love dancing.

S: [laughing softly]

G: She used to dance, there was a band leader in the flat [laughing]. There was a – and then it was – she was accused by her – flirting with this man. And he was quite a – he – they used to make records. He was a quite a a a you know, this um ... waltzes and things? Like almost Victor Sylvester sort of thing, this old music that they played.

<1:09:47>

S: Mm.

G: And then I think she used to go to every dance in this in the Drill Hall.

S: Mm.

G: They used to dance every Friday in the drill hall [laughing].

S: Ja, I know, ja -

G: [Laughs again] So she loved dancing. So she uh no, I dunno how they met.

S: Mm. Sjoe.

G: But his wife was quite old. Because he was 64. But he had lot of money. He used to take her to shop.

S: Mm.

G: And she wanted to shop at the best shops in town.

S: Sjoe.

G: Always Stuttafords and ... Garlicks and all that.

S: Wow. Um so how many brothers and sisters did you have?

G: Well she had children, how many I think she had? There was John, Bella, ... oh and Gertie. And they all played white. John, Bella and Gertie. That *vrou* she was married!

<1:08:53>

S: Mm.

G: My fa- my mother was married while she was having an affair with this Mr Adams -

S: [overtalk] So they were both married!

G: Hey?

S: So they were both -

G: [Simultaneously] They were both married, yes! [laughs]

S: Sjoe.

G: She was married. She had big children and – oh now I remember. It comes back now. I remember why he took me away because of the arguments. It was only the argument of her getting so involved. It was a argument because she ... she pretended to her husband that he's my father. He was a Mr Peterson. And he was married to her and he had children by her. And that was my half-brothers. And the children in Lakeside was also my half-brothers.

S: Mm hm

G: So it was quite a funny situation that these people – got themselves tied up in.

S: Mm.

<1:08:09>

G: So um, so the arguments couldn't stop and uh he used to ... he used to accuse her and they were always fighting, and the neighbours had to come and – *dingus* and then – then she decided to give me to my real father.

S: Mm.

G: And that's how I left them.

S: Sjoe.

G: Because of all this fighting. ... Typical little – almost like a – film! [laughing]

S: But c- I mean it must have been a very difficult experience for you as a young little girl. I mean six years old to -

G: Ja -

S: - go through that.

G: - he he didn't take me straight to his par- eh to his family.

S: Mm.

G: He took me to his one son.

S: Mm.

G: He took me to his elder son who was a a a teacher in Victoria West. He escaped with me, but then they when they went to see him off on Cape Town Station where on a train, in a – I believe the one daughter said, '*M- maar, daddy het dan 'n jong kind saam met hom. Daddy het dan 'n jong kind saam met hom.*' So they found out about me and ooh it was a whole to-do. There was also a family meeting, with this all this her chil- their children. In Lakeside. And I had to stand in – in the middle of it. Listening to this. Now one said they can put me in a home. The other one said, no keep her. And so it went on. And they decided, they keep me, but I my my my f- my father [distant voices and dog grunting in background] the old man, must never ever get in touch, and never ever go to Salt River again. So that was how I stay there.

<1:6:30>

S: Sjoe.

G: Ja.

S: And they had this meeting in front of you, the two sides?

G: In front of me, I was standing in the sitting room

S: Do you -

G: Mm. I just came back from Victoria West because they decided to come and fetch their father in Victoria West to see what's going on. [Dog? Grunting in background]

S: Mm.

G: And they brought me back.

<1:06:15>

S: And this was in 1940 when you're six year's old?

G: Yeah. 1940.

S: Did you remember what it felt like, as a six year old -

G: [Interrupting] No, I can't remember. I just know I stood there. I had a nice maroon coat.

S: Mm.

G: I had a nice coat on. I dunno where they bought this coat. D'you hardly see children in it in South Africa, with these coats. It's more or less in Europe because of the coldness there. But I had a coat like that. So uh, ja. And his son went to - Victoria West because he was having an affair again here with his, with the dominee of the d- his daughter, so they they deported him. Go and preach out there [laughing] in Victoria West! Oh my word, those -

S: Ja -

G: - people hey.

S: Ja. So let me get it - right. On your mother's side of the family there was, how how many children did she have?

G: She had I think b- she had three children, John, Bella and and - John, Bella and Gertie, ja.

S: Ok.

G: Mm.

<1:05:17>

S: So those are your - w- or half -

G: My mother's children [indistinct]

S: - half half siblings. And then on your father's side, what was -

G: He had ten.

S: Ten, so you had -

G: A lot of bro-

S: A lot of half brothers and sisters -

G: Ja, and I'm today the only one left.

S: Sjoe.

G: I'm the only one left.

S: Wow.

- G: The others all passed on. They all buried in Muizenberg.
- S: Wow. <1:04:57>
- G: They have a big plot there in Muizenberg.
- S: Mm.
- G: I'm the only one.
- S: Sjoe. And so when you were growing up in Lakeside, you grew up in the what in the big family house with a lot -
- G: Massive family house yes, big family house. And they always – they they were never they were never in want of anything. There was no poverty. Because of his business mind.
- S: Mm hm.
- G: And he could still take his girlfriend to Stuttafords, and all that [laughing. Child humming in the background]. Ja.
- S: Sjoe. It's amazing. And do you remember I mean your early experiences of going to school? What was it like going to school? What I mean -
- G: Ooh I love going to school. I always came third or fourth never ... never la- never further than that. Always third and fourth. And the principals used to like me. They all used to like me. But that time they used to like fair-skinned people, you know. There was that – funny thing.
- S: Mm hm hm.
- G: Ja.
- S: And and and that was in Retreat you said you went to school?
- G: Ja [dog panting]. On a you know where's Pick 'n 'Pay standing today in Retreat? <1:03:55>
- S: Mm hm hm?
- G: Opposite Nissan?
- S: Mm hm.
- G: On the Tokai Road, there's a old Pick 'n Pay.
- S: Ja, ja, ja [simultaneously].
- G: There was my school.
- S: What was it called?
- G: Uh uh Re- Dutch Reform School.
- S: Ok.

G: Mm.

S: And was it quite a sort of mixed school, I mean different backgrounds as kids?

G: There was ... it wasn't whites, there was no whites.

<1:03:36>

S: No whites, no.

G: No whites. But there was a whole lot of different cul- you know there was is uh ... um, there was some Africans staying -

S: Mm -

G: - In uh near our house. There it's called Raabkraal now.

S: Mm.

G: And uh - it was called Rabkraal at the time, but there was African's staying there, and coloureds all staying, it was like a shan- uh uh a squatter camp, in Lakeside.

S: Oh but is that was that close to - Blouvlei?

G: No, where you going to now? You're going to Retreat.

S: No so that's more Retreat side, hey?

G: Ja. Now did you know where um ... if you ride near our plot man, if you ride on the Main Road, then you gonna turn up to go onto this the the highway?

S: Mm hm hm?

G: In Steenberg.

<1:02:47>

S: Ja, ja.

G: Ja. There's a place called Raabkraal (??) -

S: Ok.

G: - Road. And there's a whole lot of white people. There's a old farm still standing there.

S: Ok.

G: That was Frogmore Farm, there was a farm there. But up that road was a whole lotta tin shanties.

S: Ok. Sjoe.

G: And we used to go and play there because it was all our friends, we went to school together.

S: Mm.

G: And African ... people stayed next to coloured people. But we stayed on the Main Road. Because of this -

- S: Ja.
- G: We little of this. And it was nice to stay there, and they got rid of all that people.
- S: Mm.
- G: It was like Windemere – they went in - <1:02:15>
- S: Well this is the thing, I know you know the two big – what we today would call informal settlements you know -
- G: Ja.
- S: - and then we would talk – call shantytowns -
- G: Yes -
- S: - was Blouvillei and Windermere -
- G: Mm. Ah. Ah.
- S: Those were the two big ones.
- G: Mm.
- S: But there must I there were, I know there lots of little list- smaller pockets around.
- G: There was that one on Military Road that they call Lavender Hill today.
- S: That's right.
- G: That was a squatter camp.
- S: That was also ja.
- G: That was a squatter – they had a other name. <1:01:54>
- S: Mm hm.
- G: What it? I forget now -
- S: I can't think of it either -
- G: - what it name. Ja.
- S: But that's interesting.
- G: But that side, that Raabkaal Road?
- S: Mm?
- G: - where's all that big rich white people stay now, that was a squatter camp before. I used to go and play there.
- S: Sjoe.

- G: I used to go and play there in the afternoons. My little cousins. Because the old man's [woman's voice singing in the background] one son just stayed over that ro- over the road.
- S: Mm hm hm.
- G: And his children. And we were -
- S: Mm. <1:01:28>
- G: - family you know.
- S: Mm. And this is when you were like in primary school then your -
- G: Ja. Ja.
- S: [Indistinct]
- G: No this school that I went to was from Sub A. There wasn't primary and that -
- S: Ja no that's what I mean.
- G: It was from s- Sub A right until Standard six.
- S: Sjoe so that was throughout the 1940s, would have been.
- G: Ja.
- S: Ja.
- G: Ja.
- S: And do you remember when sort of I mean you must have been well about – fourteen years old when Apartheid government came to power. Do you remember those kind of big events as a as a young teenager?
- G: Oh I remember they had a fes- They used to have once a year Riebeeck Festival in town.
- S: Mm hm. <1:00:54>
- G: Then we were told not to go. We must boycott it.
- S: Mm.
- G: [laughing] Not to go, that type of thing.
- S: But be- before that but I mean do you remember -
- G: [talking simultaneously] No but I can't [indistinct]
- S: - the beginning of of Apartheid at all, I mean as a child?
- G: No, I can't remember that.
- S: Because you were -

- G: I think my parents – most probably more.
- S: Ja.
- G: Because we were too busy b- uh uh. What were we doing? We didn't even notice!
- S: [Talking simultaneously] Well that's the – that's what I thought.
- G: We didn't even notice it. <1:00:33>
- S: Ja, because you were like a teenage girl at fourteen years old -
- G: Ja!
- S: And ja we-
- G: We didn't even – and we were too busy.
- S: Mm.
- G: Working in the factories and coming on the weekends and smoking yourself drunk and – [laughing]
- S: [laughing] Aaah!
- G: So we didn't notice uh we -
- S: Ja.
- G: - we just heard, we always heard the -
- S: Mm mm.
- G: - the talk about the the the government -
- S: Ja. Ja.
- G: - the government. And we were t- O- our people were also terrified of the [girl's voice singing softly in background] of the government.
- S: Ja. <1:00:07>
- G: You know we were nervous wrecks actually.
- S: Mm.
- G: Because we were terrified we could – if you like say s- said something to a white man it was wrong, and you could go -
- S: Mm.
- G: - to jail and all that. They just threw you in jail for nothing at that time.
- S: Ja.

G: You know?

S: Ja, because it must of - So, I mean you remember when you ... first became aware of the situation. Because as as a child as you say – I mean you know -

G: Aware -

S: It is something that impacts your adult's -

<0:59:40>

G: Oh I was aware when I we used to ride train and go the only some beaches -

S: Aah -

G: The trains had the boards on.

S: Mm.

G: You could only sit in a certain. That little things you know? It wasn't big.

S: Mm mm mm.

G: But when you grew older you realise -

S: It's a first ja - [talking simultaneously]

G: - how big it was and how -

S: It was your first awareness of of sort of race being imposed -

G: That's it yes, yes. Because we were too, too busy with our youth ... to get involved -

S: Mm.

G: - you know?

<0:59:18>

S: And that would have been the early sort of, in the 1950's probably?

G: That – that would have been the '50s yes.

S: Ja, early 50's ja.

G: And uh -

S: Sjoe.

G: And oh the theatre was our thing. Our we after I m- I met Albert yes. I met Albert in a drama group.

S: Ok, tell me about that.

G: I met Albert when we were involved e- They had this beau- fantastic group in in uh it was called the South Peninsula – Dramatic Society [Christmas carols on the radio in background]. And then – I still got some papers inside. Oh and Albert also had – ja, it was called the South Peninsula Dramatic Society. And uh I I joined. It was in Lansdowne. It was the Principal of Livingstone High

that started this. And Albert went to Livingstone High and he joined it. And we used to be at – and they put on fantastic plays! Not the – oh goodness me, I I wouldn't even want to bother to go to the theatre today, especially the Masque and all that theatres. But the first play that I took part in was at the Scopus theatre.

S: Where's that?

G: That was in town.

S: Ok.

<0:58:95>

G: They had a competition once a year. You know where the old Space is?

S: Mm hm?

G: Now there was this theatre called a Scopus.

S: Ok I've never -

G: And it was run by um. Oh they had a competition and ev- e- all the drama groups would join. There was quite a lot of drama groups. But this drama group that we belonged to done all the good plays. It done Gorky's 'Lower Depths'. And uh, what more? Oh and they still, I don't know how they managed. Oh yes. They went, they done 'The Visit'. Duramat's 'The Visit' at the Labia. And uh Shaw's 'Arms and the Man' at the Woodstock Town Hall. Such a fantastic drama group. Shaw's 'Arms and the Man'. What more did they do? Oh and they done this uh, 'The Potboiler' there out to party. And then we won this time at this – competition. But then came the the the the the ... um permit.

S: Ah. Mm.

G: What's it? Uh Amenities, what's it?

S: Mm. Access to Amenities or something -

G: You couldn't, you could – and then they done 'The Blacks' at the Claremont Town Hall. And while they were doing 'The Blacks' they police came in because just of the title of the play [laughs]. Just of the title and and it put everybody off! The police stomped in there up to the stage.

<00:56:43>

S: [laughs quietly]

G: Because the play was uh I think it was – no. 'The Blacks', yes. But what did they do at uh they donst the – one of those beautiful great old master's plays. It's Steinberg or something like that at the – Labia. Then came this uh permit. You had to go and ask for the permit if you wanted different coloured -

S: Ja.

G: - people in your group.

S: Mm hm.

G: Or you wanted a audience. Then they decided they were very militant. They decided they not gonna – so the drama group broke up. Which was such a great pity. And uh ... so – ja and then we used to come home one o'clock from rehearsals. With the last train from – we didn't stay here of

course. We stayed in Simonstown. With the last train we used to come home from rehearsals and go work the next day.

S: Mm.

G: So so we were so imp- impassioned with this drama group. Then Albert started I think before they they broke up. Albert started a drama group called 'The New Theatre'. And there he also had different – there was a lot of university students in – I've still got a programmes inside. And I think they done a play – I forgot the play. But uh there was a whole lotta mix. Alex du Toit and ... oh and Simon Rappaport, all those people was involved. And um ... Charlotte, Charlotte ja. Alex and Charlotte got married afterwards. Oh Carter Ebrahim. And uh uh ... no there was quite of prom - people that turned out to be very prominent in that new theatre. Then he also – they also broke up because of this, this – I think the new ... the Peninsular Dramatic Society broke up before the New Theatre. Or it broke up and then Albert started a new –

<0:54:37>

S: Mm hm.

G: He had quite a whole lot of nice young people. We stayed in Wynberg at the time. Nice young people from – all different types of – *dingus*. So that's the theatre. That's how I met Albert and we – went on to theatre. I love theatre. I still write theatre.

S: Mm. How did you first get in- I mean interested in theatre, or was it at school?

G: No. I got interested in theatre because A- Albert was involved in theatre.

S: So how did you meet – I you met him in the group?

G: I met him in the group, yes.

S: Mm.

G: I met him in the group.

S: He certainly looked like a very debonair – looking at that photograph -

G: Who?

S: Looking at that photograph, Albert there. [laughing] Or -

G: I met him in a group, yes. We – oh he took part, what was that? Wh- Where the producers – they we rehearse in a Woodstock Town Hall, on a Sunday afternoon.

S: Is that where you met him? Sjoe.

<0:53:41>

G: No, not on a Sun-, but I mean I used to go to the rehearsals.

S: Mm.

G: Mm. It wasn't – he done 'Lower Depths.' I loved that play now, *in die Gorky's* 'Lower Depths'.

S: [laughing quietly]

G: All of ... oh and uh ... and he was Mr Brecht. Crazy about Bertault Brecht.

S: Mm hm hm.

G: And uh you must take it to to the university, man! But it – the young people of today is not interested in that stuff, hey?

S: Ja. Not interested in Brecht.

G: Not interested in Brecht. And the Thrupenny opera's you can adapt to the situation here.

S: Mm, hm, hm.

G: 'Cause there's a lotta gangsters in there and drunkards and skelms.

S: [laughs]

G: [laughs]

<0:53:00>

S: [Laughing] Aaah! Interesting.

G: That's the end of that now and then I went to ... live in Simonstown.

S: So when did you go and live in Simonstown?

G: I first stayed in Wynberg with my eldest brother, Rupert the architect I told you about.

S: Mm hm.

G: And um and then we got married in Wynberg and then we went to live in Simonstown. Married out of his house there in Wynberg and we went to live – stayed there a little and then we went to Simonstown. And uh -

S: What what year was that?

G: That could have been – when did I go in Simonstown?. I think it is ... I also stayed in Lakeside with Albert there where in the old family house, big house. And um ... ja, when did I go and live in Simons? I can't remember. I think it was ... in the 50's. Fifty six, something around there.

S: Ok.

G: Fifty seven ja.

S: Mm.

G: We lived in Simonstown and ooh we was – it was a nice place. Beautiful place to live in. We lived right under the mountain with the waterfall. So lovely. There's where the Group Areas caught us.

<0:51:53>

S: Mm.

G: That's where the Group Areas [indistinct].

S: So why did you move to Simonstown? Did Albert have a connection there?

G: Albert born in Simonstown.

S: Ok, of course, ja.

G: He was born there and his parents grew there and he grew up in Simonstown.

S: Mm, ok of course ja.

G: So ... so he so me and him went back to Simonstown [radio in background]. He wanted to go back to Simonstown.

S: And the house – did you go back to his old family house or was it – did you buy a house there or -

G: No it was a -

S: - rent a house –

<0:52:28>

G: - he had old, they had a old house there that he rented -

S: Ok.

G: - under the mountains there.

S: Mm hm.

G: And we went there. Oh he first found me a place to live ... from Lakeside. When I left my family, Lakeside family I went to go and live by some – aunt of his. And then we got married and then I went back to live with my brother again and [indistinct] we go back and forth like a circus [laughing]

S: Sjoe.

G: No but it w- it was interesting times. Until we were forced out.

S: Mm.

G: Where did I – there – oh we came here after we was forced out, yes.

S: Mm hm hm.

G: Ja.

S: But but maybe just before you talk about the Forced Removal. I mean, can you remember your wedding day?

G: Oh my we- word my wedding!

S: [Laughs]

<0:50:40>

G: Ooh it was the funniest, I don't think. I got married on court. Because Albert was said he was a atheist. He don't want to get married in church. And I just I just followed the man.

S: [Soft laugh]

G: And we got married on Simonstown court.

S: Mm.

G: And uh ... and then uh we went back to Wynberg, to my brother's house there, and there was all my factory friends, all at the wedding. And uh ... God it was too funny. It was the funniest wedding I ever seen.

S: [laughing] Why?

G: Because my one uncle brought my one [dog barking] my one uncle brought a crate of bananas man [laughing]. A crate of bananas for the wedding! And oh *god*. And uh my auntie she used to be so jealous of her husband because he used to play – he he had a band. He she was at the wedding. Auntie Nattie. She was at the wedding. And then she accused one of my factory friends of eyeing her husband. And they were starting to argue, ooh *heerlik*. And then one fat aunt again, my one fat aunt, heard s- one of my friends said that her saying that she's like a little elephant you know [dog barking]. There they were also fighting [laughing!]

S: On your wedding day?

<00:49:19>

G: On my wedding day, at the reception man. The reception was in a house. And it was the funniest. I try say that man brought a crate of banana's man. Jinneer. And [laughs] we had the funniest wedding.

S: Mm.

G: We paid two and six to get married [laughing] at the court! Uh uh.

S: Sjoel. And did your family come, any of your family come?

G: Was my family? No, this was at my brother's house, remember the -

S: [talking simultaneously] Oh ok.

G: - one of Lakeside brothers. And its -

S: So they all - did your Lakeside family came.

G: The Lakeside family was all there. They wouldn't allow my mother's family near there.

S: Mm. Ja.

G: So uh, ja, the Lakeside family was there. And the it's at one of the brothers houses that we lived and got married there.

<0:48:33>

S: Mm.

G: But the Lakeside family was all there. The one was more f- bloody stupid than the other.

S: [Laughing]. Tell me a bit, I mean before we talk about other things –

G: Ah -

S: I mean I mean where were were particular siblings in your Lakeside family where you obviously grew up with -

G: Yes I did -

S: - you were closer to – who was you close to, tell me a bit about your -

G: I had opposite the road was Christy, he stayed with his – two daughters. And and and one son Alistair. And Norma. Alistair, Norma, what was the – oh and Dulcie. They were our – we walked to school together every morning. And um ... and we – oh and Sunday Sundays the whole family, all the different families come together in the big house. Then they cook for s- lunch for everybody. ‘Cos all the aunties and uncles is all coming with their children.

S: Mm.

G: And then we play along the river, you know? Catching tadpoles and so-on. And because the family had – that’s the Sundays. They don’t do it anymore, you know?

S: So like big f- Sunday family gatherings?

<0:47:28>

G: Ja! And I oh – they had this kitchen and then the old ladies cooking and making all sorts of nice things and so on because ... Vernie’s coming with his children, Christie’s children’s over the road and ... Rika’s coming with her two and oh go- whole lot of chi- I don’t know where they’ve got all the food from you know to feed all that people? But they were there. And there was never wine in our house. Because the old man was such a churchgoer.

S: Uh huh. What what religion was he?

G: Dutch Reform.

S: Is it, oh.

G: No s- I smoke, we smoked. We’s used together S- Saturday morning and so. I smoked these pipes sometimes [laughing]. He used to go bath Saturday mornings and he leave his pipe in the room and I s- put tobacco in the pipe and I smoke he smoke pipe. And uh – there was never wine or smoking and r- you want to play a game uh ... cards. Then they say you’re gambling. They were so bloody precious.

S: Was your f- so your father quite conservative, I mean?

G: Very conservative.

S: Mm mm.

G: Very conservative, mm. But -

S: And did you have to go to church, I mean -

G: I had to go to Sunday school every afternoon. [Man’s voice shouting in background]. Every afternoon.

<0:46:13>

S: Sjoie. Wow.

G: Every afternoon uh Sunday afternoon I had to go to Sunday school. And they used to b- have a special room where they ate in. They called it the breakfast room.

S: Why?

G: The breakfast room. Because they only ate in that room, they never cooked. They just ate such a big ... family. And the st- uh -

S: Mm.

G: - the kitchen was there. And and that door there, there here is the breakfast room. With a big table.

S: Mm.

G: And they ate.

S: Was he – I mean what was his f- mother-tongue?

G: Who?

S: Your father.

<0:45:41>

G: Afrikaans.

S: Afrikaans.

G: Mm- all, only spoke Afrikaans.

S: Is it. And do you speak – I mean was Afrikaans your mother-tongue?

G: I spoke English and Afrikaans. Because the neighbours along the road all spoke Afrikaans. There was a whole lot of neighbours -

S: Mm.

G: - our of our own coloured people staying on the opposite side of the road.

S: Mm hm.

G: Then there was whites staying. There was Italian families staying. All staying to uh mix.

S: Mm.

G: Until they moved out there. And they were moved out there too. We move long before ... the Group Areas took my family out of Lakeside.

S: Ok. That's that's that's what I was trying to uh work out as well. 'Cos you left earlier to get married?

G: I left earlier and I left the family home as it was -

<0:45:02>

S: Ja.

G: - there.

S: So when was your – I mean seeing that you mentioned it – when was when was your family pushed out there?

G: Out of there?

S: Of Lakeside ja?

G: They went back and forth in dribs and drabs. Then this one stayed there after the old people died then that one stayed there but I then didn't bother anymore with Lakeside. Because I'm -

S: [talking simultaneously] Were here -

G: - was now in Simonstown.

S: Mm mm.

G: You see?

S: Sjoe.

G: But now I'm ... they ... giving the whatitsname their re- uh -imbursing the lands claim.

<0:44:35>

S: Is it?

G: Mm.

S: Some of your – ah.

G: Mm. And I'm the only one left.

S: Sjoe.

G: I'm the only one left. Amazing, hey?

S: What so you s- your family -

G: I sometimes say, '*Onkryt vervang nooit!*' [Laughs]

S: [Laughing] Wow!

G: I was -

S: So that probably was late 50s that you know after you had left. Late 50s, early 60s in the Lakeside?

G: My son, my eldest son was born in the 50s.

S: Mm.

G: Ja. So we left there uh I think we left um ... no we were in Wynberg. In Simonstown I think we left no my children were big already, when we left Simonstown.

<0:44:36>

S: Ja, ja.

G: They were teenagers.

S: So tell me, and and and children? So when did you have, how many children did you have?

G: I had three children, two boys and a girl.

S: Ok.

G: Mm, two boys and a girl.

S: So -

G: Ja, we didn't want a lot of ... children.

S: Mm.

G: So we just ... had those three children.

S: And when were they born? Just give me a -

G: The uh – Adrian was born in '56 and Andre was born ... four years afterwards. And Tania my daughter, Tania was also born four years afterwards [sound of child shouting in background]. Ja, I think, ja.

<0:43:23>

S: So '56, '60, '64?

G: Ja. Yes.

S: Ja. And were they all born when you were in –

G: They were - no, then we went to live again in Wynberg, back in Wynberg again, and then the one was bor- uh Adrian was born in Wynberg –

S: Mm.

G: And uh Andre was born in Lakeside.

S: Mm.

G: And Tania was also born in Wynberg.

S: Ok.

<0:43:03>

G: Ja. Then when then we moved back to Simonstown again because Albert's mother and father wanted us back with them. Oh God, was it like a little circus. [Laughs]

S: [Laughing] So you moved backwards and forwards -

G: Yes!

S: - between Lakeside and Wynberg -

G: [talking simultaneously] – between Lakeside and Wynberg -

S: - and and and Simons-

G: - and and Simonstown yes.

S: - Ja.

G: Yes, we went back to that big house too.

S: Mm.

G: That's why Andre was born there.

S: Ok.

G: That's why – because there was such a lotta rooms in the house too, you know?

S: Mm hm.

G: And and and Albert's mother's house in Simonstown wasn't big. It wasn't that big. And this house had had was right – it had a massive grounds and things -

S: Mm.

<0:42:24>

G: The Lakeside house. Big grounds. I see they put a made a camping ... camping thing now. If you go past there now they had – put in all the -

S: Mm.

G: - Furniture on the law- on the – in a ho- and the plot is still standing bare -

S: Mm.

G: - nothing on.

S: Sjoe. And so when did you – um after all this moving backwards when was there a certain point in which you ... stayed in Simonstown for a longer period?

G: Ja, I think there was a point that we stayed in Simonstown, because our friends all used – Alberts friends used to come visit him there. We then stayed in Simonstown. We never went back because it – we moved out of Simonstown. We never moved out of Lakeside or Wynberg.

S: Mm hm.

G: [Mechanical sound in background] Simonstown was a place we moved out of.

S: Mm.

<0:41:41>

G: And we stayed out there.

S: And ... so do you remember when when did the removal happen from Simonstown to here, to Ocean View?

G: I think it was in the sixties -

S: Late, it's probably late sixties hey?

G: Late sixties, sixty eight -

S: Ja, ja.

G: Somewhere round there.

S: Round there.

G: Mm.

S: And tell me, I mean maybe in in -

G: We didn't believe it, you know?

S: Is it?

G: We thought it was a joke.

S: But w- so why how did you first hear about the removal, I mean -

G: Man there was a – a rumour going around -

<0:41:15>

S: Mm.

G: - that ... that the government was gonna w- Oh you know what happened? Atlantis – was it Atlantis now or what? M- no it was Atlantis. Atlantis was built. Then they put some of the coloured people there.

S: Mm.

G: A lot of – and that was very far out of Cape Town.

S: Mm mm.

G: Then it was – the rumour went around that the government want all the coloured people out of S- out of Cape Town. They want to put the people in Atlantis, they want to make a Homeland. With the coloured people in Atlantis.

S: Mm.

G: Don't know how true it was, it sound true to me.

S: Mm hm.

G: Because you couldn't put it pass them. [Dog panting in background] So it w- so it was said, yes that they uh they gonna build houses in Atlantis and and every everybody must move out of Cape Town. It must only be for whites. That was the rumour that was going around. And nobody took any notice. And before we uh knew it, there was people coming. There was inspectors coming around with – to give notice. They started down in the bottom. Then the rumour came around that we must move out of Simonstown. Then everybody thought it was – where never. They're the people's then all working for the navy. Why would they move us out of Simonstown? Then they had protest meetings and protest meetings and then it nothing came of it, these protest meetings. [Child's voice calling in background] And then it took quite a long time to get everybody to realise what's happening. And then they moved them dribs, dribs and drabs. Then this one, then that one, then here to Ocean View. And one day we came to see Ocean View. Oh my God. What a terrible place. There wasn't lights in the street. It was all sand and oh. And they were still building these – this is the first lot of houses that they built.

<0:39:19>

S: Mm.

G: These cottages. And then Albert said, 'Oh *god*, I'm rather gonna p- I'm not gonna stay in this place. I'm rather going overseas. I'm gonna live somewhere else.' So we realised that it was all true, that we are gonna move. The children, you had to tell the children why you're moving and all that. It was terrible. Heartbreaking. And I think that set me off, you know? [Dog panting in background]

S: Mm.

G: I wasn't even so, didn't even feel so bad when I was – moved from my mother. But when I was moved from Simonstown because of the ... of the ... Group Areas Act, oh God. ... Mm mm. It was terrible yes. And the old people, well, and we weren't even as bad as the ... as the the uh people that lived in Glencairn. They got flats you know, these big apartment blocks that they built here. I believe they not gonna build blocks like that anymore. It's too un ... sociable -

S: Mm.

G: You can't social properly.

<0:38:03>

S: Mm.

G: Socialise properly. It's anti-social. And that people had to make a hole and kill their animals and bury their animals. Because you couldn't like – take animals in a flats.

S: Mm.

G: [Dog panting in background, smaller dog yapping in background]. Ooh it was so cruel, oh.

S: Sjoe. But um, I mean moving here must have been very difficult experience, coming from Simonstown.

G: We never stayed here, when we moved.

S: What was your first here in Ocean -

G: The first house was when you come in by the entrance up top there's, you see the two big apartment blocks there?

S: Mm mm.

G: We stayed there. And there was 12 families in each block. So there was 24 families and a courtyard in a middle.

S: Mm sjoe. I mean you don't have to answer this question but can you remember the day when you – did that final move from Simonstown to the first house here in Ocean View, what it was like?

<0:37:13>

G: Man what ... Albert's mother stayed here already.

S: Mm.

G: We stayed on in the house in Simonstown. But it was ... I don't know I ... I can't remember how I felt. I can't remember how I felt but I know I was ... already long before we moved, I was already feeling angry.

S: Ja.

G: You know? Miserable and bitter.

S: Mm mm mm.

G: To think that they can do this [Voices and knocking sounds in background]. And then Albert's nagging on my head to ooh God I dunno what's gonna happen to this. And ... I felt bad about it. Felt so bad, jinnee. And the children want to know, 'Is there sea water there ma, is there sea, can we catch fish there?' *Ek dink* you can catch sand there, not fish! [Laughing]

S: Mm.

G: You know, that type of thing.

S: Mm. Sjoe.

G: Ja. So we we moved here, no we moved in that flat up there. Flats, you know that I must I must say that they ... I must say that hadn't it been for that move, I don't the that ... it's it sounds ironic. Ironic to say this, but I think that uh that um ... the that government, that regime made a lot of landlords out of people here.

<0:35:47>

S: Mm.

G: And they brought us together. Because they was some people playing white in Simonstown and some you know that all that type of thing.

S: Mm.

G: So actually in a way it was a sort of a to bringing us together here. And look today there's people that lived in little s- s-squatter camps in Simonstown. There was also squatter camps there, under the mountain. And they lived in Simonstown under uh um in that conditions and then they came here, they got like houses here you could buy it, and so on. But still it was against our will and that's a that's a great sin. You know? It was against our – that was the sin about it. And to think that these ... rulers can have the audacity to do that to people. [children playing in background]. I mean we all South Africans. We – now today you can live where you like.

S: Mm.

G: That's ch- uh that's some of the changes that's good -

S: Mm.

G: - in the new democracy that I feel.

S: Ja.

G: Ja. That your freedom, your freedom.

<0:34:45>

S: Ja, no it's absolutely against your will, that's I mean that's critical [Dog barking loudly, drowning speaking]. But tell me I mean -

G: Hey! [addressing dog] Sit [whispers]. [Dog barks more softly].

S: Um. [Dog barking loudly again] Let's put the pause button. [Button clicks] Uh ... no um ... the obviously a big part of the removals was that um ... your family I mean do you remember well the first time your you heard that your family – although w- I don't know how to put the question. But I

mean you you mentioned that part of your family played for white. But obviously you were removed because you were classified coloured by -

G: Mm.

S: - by the regime. But I mean tell me -

G: [talking simultaneously] Mix.

S: Ja.

G: Mix.

S: Ja, [indistinct] it was, but tell me about that experience, I mean about the race classifica-

G: You mean uh l- uh where?

<0:33:53>

S: Well the race classification and how you experienced it?

G: Are you talking about Salt River now, when I was little or are you talking about when I was married already?

S: Well when when did you become I mean when – because you said became conscious of it for the first time when you were travelling on the trains and the buses and stuff.

G: Oh yes w- with the whites only trains and so on, yes.

S: Mm hm.

G: That was a ... another experience. That one felt that you were forced to do -

S: Mm.

G: - to uh – it was actually um de-g- not degrading. We didn't degrade ourselves [Lots of childrens voices in background]. It was a sort of a a feeling of ... not belonging. You know? Not belonging to your own country.

S: Mm.

G: So um, specially when you were told where to sit and where to eat and where to – God.

S: Mm. Sjoe. Now. And and and what was it – when you – the fact that how did you feel about the fact that some of your siblings passed for white? Or was that a issue?

G: Oh there was a sister in the Adams family, Stienie.

S: Mm.

<0:32:42>

G: She – it i- was a great issue.

S: Mm?

G: 'Cos one of their daughters, half-sister of mine, Stiedie, she married a ole artis'. His name is Anderson, he was a Englishman. Anderson. He used to draw all the ... sceneries.

S: Mm.

G: Of the Cape Peninsular. I think his work is collector's items today. She had a – she married him and he was also much older than her, just like my father and his – girl. He was also Anderson was also much older than her but he was a a real old gentleman.

S: Hm mm.

G: And she! She used to call him, daddy, oh God I don't know why she used to call him, daddy. Because he was older. She m-moved out of th- out of her family with that white ... artist. She's there was a time she lived in uh Steerhof. They had their own house then. Lotta children. I wouldn't even know the children today if I see them. And they wouldn't know me. But um she moved out of the family, we never saw her again.

S: Sjoe.

<0:31:34>

G: She went to play white. She moved right out. 'Cos she had some beautiful children. Buddy and ... Priscilla. Buddy yes, Buddy Priscilla. Buddy was blush, you could see his mother was coloured. And you know the funniest thing today when I walk in the street? I can see anybody pass me I can see there's coloured in that person. There's just something about it that shows you that person i- I can see you Jewish.

S: [laughing]

G: But there's something in that person, you know what they – they white you know they sort of -

S: Mm.

G: - doing everything that uh. But you can see there's something, and that Stienie left the family just like that.

S: And you never saw her -

G: Her mother and father died. They never saw her again.

S: Sjoe. So were were we-

G: Because the white world in this country was so le- so fantastic for them. They didn't have to go through all the sh-shit that we had to go through. You know?

S: So where were you, was was were you and the rest of the family very angry with her?

G: Her family was very – her mother and father was angry, yes. But she didn't care.

S: Mm.

G: And she was quite pretty. She looked like a Filipino. 'Cos the old lady was a Filipino. The Adams, Mrs Adams.

<0:30:19>

S: Oh, ok. Ok.

G: She was from S-Filipino. That's why one of her grandsons ha- they on the internet. The whole Adams family's on the internet. I got it up there. It's on the internet and there you can see how beautiful she is. So I don't know why he messed around with my mother. There's my mother.

S: Wow.

G: That's my mother.

S: Ja? She looks Ir-

G: [talking simultaneously] Look at the -

S: She looks Irish.

G: Look at the movie snaps, look at the movie snaps.

S: Ja. And that's near, is this uh ... is that in in the middle of Cape Town?

G: Ja.

<0:29:44>

S: Ja, near the Post Office?

G: Yes, yes!

S: I know, my parents also used to have photographs like that.

G: [Laughs]

S: Wow.

G: Now now she she but um ... this fa- family also had beautiful daughters hey, the Adams family.

S: Sjoe. That's amazing. And was there any other family members that tried to pass for white?

G: Was there? Was such a massive family.

S: Mm.

G: No I don't.

S: Just her. [very soft]

G: Only Stienie and all her children.

S: Mm.

G: And they change their cards, they change their ... their *dingus*. For white. Her mother and father used to go and visit her Sunday afternoons and then daddy's painting in his – he had a s- little studio on a stoep. And old daddy A-Anderson is painting. And he used to go round from door to door to sell his work. You know? And his – I saw now recently some – in some of our family also got some of his work. Now recently I um ... saw one in a in a artshop in Kalk Bay, one of the A-Andersons. Used to do that dark ... mountains, scenery, you know.

<0:28:24>

S: Mm.

G: And it's actually collector's items today. And I dunno where's that woman. I'm sure she must be dead. I heard once says she's living in uh where was it they said she's living? Steenber- no,

not Steenberg. Seapoint somewhere there or Johannesburg. Uh somewhere there. That's playing white. Rejecting your family.

S: Sjoe. Um -

G: You don't have to do it today. You can be what you want to be today. You don't have to play white anymore.

S: Mm.

G: So we don't have to be scared that our children's going to play white and so-on.

S: Mm.

G: Change their IDs and all that nonsense.

<0:27:41>

S: Sjoe. So um ... when did you, I mean tell me we haven't talked li- really about your – when did you start writing?

G: I started writing in Simonstown.

S: Is it?

G: I wrote this one poem. The - well I dunno. I always imagined poetry is supposed to be beauty, about beauty and ... and pleasant things. Well I sat in a train one day and I saw ... I came from – where did I go? I went out somewhere and I sat in a train. And I saw this lorry full of furniture going coming here. And I wr- I still got a very original thing that I done. And I wrote a poem about a Group Areas. 'Fall tomorrow.' And then the last stanza I'll write, that this gov- that the government a- of that time is going to fall. 'Your mould you that remade us your mould will break and tomorrow you are going to fall'. That type of thing. And then I sent the poem. I didn't want to show Albert. I was too embarrassed to show Albert. But it's worked on my nerves. This is was – it's about the anger. Bringing out all the anger of moving and seeing this people moving and seeing people breaking up their wardrobes and their cupboards and – because it can't go into the doors here. And then I sent it to James Matthews. And James came to visit me, and James say, 'Gladys, you must keep on writing, this is good.' I say, 'But that's not poetry, there's no flowers in there or anything.' [laughing] He was then the great writer. So uh I wrote more. And then he started writing. And then we brought out this book. The first book of protest poet. It was protest poetry. It was protes'. And then we brought out this book, it was - I'll never forgot it. The book was launched in the old Space Theatre. Richard Rive ... launch the book. And uh myself and James' poetry together: 'Cry Rage'. I think Albert titled the book or James one of the two of them. 'Cos we didn't stay here we stayed in the flat up top there when I brought out this. Just moved here, when the book came out -

<0:25:14>

S: Ja.

G: - because we working on -

S: Mm.

G: - getting the collection together. And uh looking for a publisher, Raven Press published. And then we launched the book and then we couldn't sell the book, in bookshops. And we sold the books, we sold the copies in friends' houses, you know? Sort of have parties and sell the copies like that. And uh ... *god* two weeks after that there the book is banned. There they banned the book. Oooh God now I'm now a nervous wreck, I'm going to jail now [laughing]. I am going to j- oooh I'm so nervous. Ha! Every knock on the f- flat door up there I'm thinking, oh God here's the security police come to fetch me. I'm nervous, I'm bloody scared now I'm going to sit in Polsmoor [laughs]. Anyway so uh I

that's how I started writing with that that one poem, that I sit looking out of the train win- window like this. And uh thinking about the poor – poor people that must leave their ... possessions and their beautiful homes and some had ugly homes but even it was a home. And it took long to adapt here. You couldn't adapt here easily. Because it was in a worl- right out this this and Atlantis was the furthest to ... townships on the Cape Town Peninsula.

S: Mm mm.

G: This to the p- townships.

S: Ja.

G: And there's no – and Atlantis is even better off than this because there's industries there. I'm talking present day, there's interest in there –

S: [talking simultaneously] Mm mm mm.

<0:23:33>

G: - uh industries there. And here's nothing.

S: Mm.

G: Absolutely nothing. That's why all the youngsters look for money now for ... come knock on the door for money for ... for uh what they call it? Permits. To go crayfishing. And most of the youngsters here got matric. And have to walk around like that, it's frustrating.

S: Mm.

G: That's why I say this is a ha- oh I started that thing there. I I done the *dingus* for that. I say Ocean View is a plate- place of mystic beauty.

S: Mm.

G: Mystic beauty. Because the beauty's is they hiding all the bad things around here.

S: Oh, ok.

G: You know?

S: Mm.

G: But ooh I laugh my jinnee, when that bloody police – when they ban the book. Oh God. [laughing] I was tell you, every knock on the door I thought it was the police, I'm going to jail now. Uh uh. Then I s- continue writing afterwards. And after when they banned the book they brought such a lotta attention to me [laughing]. I got all sorts of people coming to me. After this book of poetry was banned.

S: [quiet laugh]

G: And Richard Richard was Richard Rive was the one that uh ... that uh that launched the book at the old Space.

<0:22:07>

S: Mm.

G: A pompous old bugger you know. [Laughs]

S: [Laughs]

G: Ooh God.

S: So what kind of people came to visit you?

G: All sorts of people from other countries all that read about this book of poetry that was banned.

S: Mm mm.

G: And uh ...

S: And and this was called, 'Cry Rage', you said.

G: Ja, 'Cry Rage' yes.

<0:21:43>

S: Sjoe.

G: There's a copy in the museum, in the Simonstown museum. Have you been to the Simonstown museum yet?

S: Mm. I -

G: Beautiful museum, it's got a whole room of our history.

S: Mm mm.

G: And uh so I continued to write, poetry. And then I wrote all those angry things man. It was still the h- in the whatitsname of the Apartheid era? All this uh protest things and so on. Then I wrote uh start writing short stories. And then plays and so on. But because of this banning, they made the biggest mistake of banning this book of poetry. Because they just brought a lot of attention to me and to ... that little short shit there [laughing]. You know when I'm sitting right in front of, in front of him. But he will never, and he talks about, and he reads his poetry. But he won't say, 'Gladys brought our poetry in this – this is our collection.' He'll just talk about himself. ... James.

S: Hm.

G: Ja, he'd just talk about himself. Anyway, I'm always falling out with him.

S: Is it? [laughing]

G: [Laughing, dog suddenly barks in background]. Look at this here?

S: Ja.

G: Noisy.

<0:20:25>

S: Sjoe. Do you have that 'Cry Rage' book here?

G: Man, I don't think I've got it here. It's missing.

S: Uh.

G: There was a collectors i- uh uh uh ... uh collection. But um my one of my sons took it to brag at school with it and he never brought it back.

S: Is it?

G: All those years ago.

S: Can you can you remember the first poem you wrote?

G: That 'Fall tomorrow'? That was the first poem, 'Fall Tomorrow'. I've got that poems here, ok. And I still write poetry now. I wrote for the women that I go and read to and so on, still write -

S: Mm.

G: - poetry and so on.

S: But -

G: [Talking simultaneously] But now my poetry's got a different message. It hasn't got all that anger.

S: Mm.

<0:19:44>

G: You know? It's got more uh sort of uh my work now tries to bring people together -

S: Mm.

G: - you know? Because is uh - you can't keep moaning when things are changing.

S: Mm.

G: And we living in a in a free, we are free.

S: Mm.

G: I mean I can move out of here tomorrow and go and live in Camps Bay or wherever I want to.

S: Mm.

G: You couldn't do it that time.

S: Mm. Ja I was just very interested, I mean, maybe that sounds completely appropriate that your po-

G: What?

S: Your - the message of your poetry's changed and your writing.

<0:19:14>

G: Oh yes I -

S: But do you - can you remember that first poem?

G: [Laughs]

S: I think they were the f-

G: I will give you a copy -

S: Ja I would love or kan jy – do you remember it in your head?

G: No, I can't!

S: You can't.

G: I don't want to [laughing].

S: Because it's a critical moment in your life.

G: I know it was. But I just know, 'Tomorrow we are going – you are going to fall.' That last last stanza, you know. But I I can't remember. If you ask me now to read it to you, I wouldn't know. I I I think there's a copy of somewhere here. But I c- I that poem was very important poem.

S: But I think it's also for I'm interested – well, why do you say it's an important poem?

G: It's an important poem because it brought a message to everybody!

S: Ja.

<0:18:33>

G: Brought a message.

S: [Talking simultaneously] Sure. Mm.

G: It wasn't, uh I would I would say it's uh [dog growling in background] words of anger.

S: Ja. Which was very appropriate anger.

G: Ja.

S: But what what interests me is that that you saying that this ... if I can use the word, your birth as a writer -

G: Uh -

S: - started at the same time with the re- you know beginnings of the removals -

G: [talking simultaneously] The removals.

S: The two – two things are together, connected.

G: [talking simultaneously] That's why I did it – that first time. And I never told Al- Albert didn't know I'm writing. Well I didn't even know it's poetry. Well everybody else said it's poetry so I also went along with it. [Laughing] Everyone. But ooh when they banned the book, it was big in the newspapers.

S: Mm.

G: They banned the book. Ja.

<0:17:47>

S: Ja no I would like to re- I would like hear some of those, read some of those poems [dog growling in background] in that first book because I think they ... clearly very important to you. And um ... now what are we doing for time?

G: What's the time?

S: It's half past three.

G: Oh it's still early.

S: Ja, still early. And and when did you – I mean – so – d-

G: Go through one of the stuff here perhaps and I go see if I can get that poem and I'll read over the – [indistinct]

S: Ja, well we can do that next time -

G: Oh, next time yes, ja ja.

S: - maybe, ja. 'Cos I um 'cos I would like to. I mean I would like you to read it on on tape.

G: Ja and -

S: - that's exactly what I wanted to do -

G: [Talking simultaneously] And maybe you can have a *dingus* with me reading poetry?

<0:17:10>

S: Ja, I would like to that next -

G: One – when you gotta spare moment.

S: Ja.

G: Next time.

S: Mm.

G: Then I read some poetry.

S: Ja. 'Specially the early poetry -

G: Then it's not a interview, it will just be a reading, that you can fit into the interview.

S: Mm mm.

G: 'Cos I got some recent poems there that I wrote too you see.

S: 'Cos also I'll be [indistinct] -

G: Specially for women.

<0:16:54>

S: Ok.

G: Ja.

S: Mm.

G: That I read a lot when I go out to gatherings.

S: Mm hm.

G: And book launches and things.

S: Mm hm.

G: Then they ask me to read, when when I give motivational talks, then I read. Poetry. So there I've got some real smart poems that makes women feel good about themselves.

S: Sjoe.

G: So the- we can have a few poems, read a few poems, we won't have such a long interview.

S: Mm hm.

G: We just have a few. You can bring us [dog barking in the background] sexy lips with.

<0:16:25>

S: [Laughing] Ok, I'm not sure I'll be able to do a interview -

G: [Laughing]

S: - with sexy lips running around. He'll fidget with everything [laughing]. Um what was I gonna say is - and did you get involved in I mean through that experience of of -

G: Political thing now?

S: Ja, what - did you get involved in o- other political things through that, after that?

G: Oh l- What do go mean after that? I just wrote those poems and things, brought out 'Cry Rage' and then that brought a lotta attention to me -

S: Mm hm.

G: - because of the banning of 'Cry Rage' as I told you.

S: Mm.

G: Brought such a lotta attention that I got involved and Albert was more very political -

S: Mm hm.

G: - minded, politically minded. And we then w- lot of friends and people -

S: Mm.

G: - and I we oh and then I read, I started with the um ... we now going to a a a to the launch of the ... of the UDF.

<0:16:25>

S: Ok.

G: That time now. So uh I read lots of poems, had lots of poetry readings at their rallies and their meetings and these things you know. And there's where I also got very involved with the political ... scene. You must remember we never had our our de- democracy at at that time.

S: Sure.

G: We were still having meetings secretly.

S: Mm mm.

G: You know, Mitchells Plain. Well the big launch in Mitchells Plain and all that.

S: But so I mean that's what I meant. I mean sort of through your experience of writing that first book -

G: Ah.

S: You became more politicised, that's how – and then got involved in - So was it mainly with writers' groups and theatre, I mean?

G: With polit- uh with uh uh with the with the activists. Mostly with the activists. Oh and then I joined the ... women's movements and all that –

<0:14:42>

S: Ok, that's that's what I remember [talking simultaneously]

G: - that's how I got intervolved in this political thing.

S: Mm. Which which I mean so how did you -

G: Oh I -

S: - get involved in women's movement?

G: There was the United Women's Organisation.

S: Oh, of course, ja. So you got involved in that?

G: I joined that. And then there was the whatsit? Uh UWCO.

S: Mm.

G: Also that. But the United Women's Organisation was banned.

S: Mm.

G: They banned it.

S: Mm.

<0:14:18>

G: And then it was UWCO, you know, Zubeida Jaffer and them.

S: Mm.

G: They were very involved in then, I was friends with them and I felt -. And um ja. And but I p- uh every rally that they had they asked me to come and read. Specially this thing they – the thing that I wrote out of the train window [laughing].

S: [Laughing]

G: ‘Fall tomorrow’.

S: Mm.

G: And uh ... ja and and so. And I used to be nervous at first, ooh God I was ... why didn't I now ever write this poem? Everybody want to hear me so reading now. And then ... I got over it. I got - Oh and I had done a lot of – we we used to march every – every march that was on, Albert used to go to work and then I go from here to march in wherever they got marches. And uh ... ja no then I I enjoyed it actually being involved. Hiding under Tutu's -

S: [Laughing softly]

G: Tutu's cl- what you call that thing?

S: Cloak, ja, ja.

G: Cloak. ... And you felt safe!

<0:13:08>

S: Mm.

G: Because the leaders were walking in front. Like Boesak, Tutu.

S: Mm.

G: All those people, and you felt safe. But the police still, they still used to hassle the people. But that time we marched in uh – we marched in orderly manners. Because we were we were proud to be involved. We didn't break things and go on like crazy things, you know.

S: Mm mm.

G: We were proud to to march and to to show people that we we want uh uh we want our our our ... our rights. And I r- read a lot of poetry all over. But [laughing] I never liked Richard [laughing].

S: [Laughing] I can hear. Ja.

G: Ooh God. He took c- called me myself and James and uh uh um. What's it? He was such a pompous old bugger. We were in Amsterdam when he was murdered.

S: Mm.

G: Oh he said uh uh ... He had a horrible, said a horrible things about me and James. Myself and James. Oh the um ... un- uneducated writers. Ed- my son was into in in his class at Hewitt -

S: Mm.

G: - Teachers Training college.

<0:11:43>

S: Mm.

G: My eldest son. 'Mum, Professor Reeve say that I there's some ... there some people in this class that that's mothers think they're writers.' [laughing]. That's that's Richard [laughing]. I say he is -

S: [talking simultaneously] That's a terrible thing to say -

G: [Laughs]

S: And to your and to your child as well.

G: Yes, hey.

S: Ja.

G: And uh his mother's I think if he was around today he would be in jail for [dog barking in background] molesting children. If he was it – but he was such a pompous – he made such a fuss. Everybody made such a big fuss of him. I saw through him long ago already. My my one family, Adams family my s- sister ... had to go and fetch her children there, by his flat. Every weekend the child want to go to his flat, there at Rosmead Avenue Richard stayed. So she said oh it's - She had to go fetch Brian. Brian's a big married man today. Richard is gone. She had to go fetch Richard there, mm mm. But I hope this things you switch it off, hey?

S: Sorry?

<0:10:37>

G: Sw- can you sw- can you erase -

S: Should I swi-

G: Can you erase that skinner? [laughing]

S: [Laughing] Sure.

G: Erase that thing hey.

S: Ok [still laughing]. Ja. Um. Sjoe. And the women's – it's interesting all these sort of political different political rallies you went to and so on.

G: Ah.

S: What was Albert doing? [dog barks loudly in background] I mean w- di- remind me what Albert did I mean for a living during while you were living in Simonstown and here?

G: Oh Albert worked at some uh ... [dog barking] He worked at some engineering firm in Paarden Eiland.

S: Ok.

G: Ja. He worked there. Ingesol Rand. Ja. He was the Office uh what's a ... he was a ... administrator in the office. 'Cos that time there were very few coloured clerks.

<0:09:43>

S: Mm.

G: Not like today where, God everybody's a manager almost today.

S: Mm.

G: But he was uh one of the few, because he took up typing, he went to typing classes and so on. So he worked there, at the engineering firm.

S: Sjoie.

G: But uh um ... those it's times you know um uh. When you sit and think about those times [dog barking in background] I think that times was ... exciting because you had something to fight for and something to ... to drive you know, to give you that – now today we got our freedom, we got nothing.

S: [Laughs quietly]

G: [Laughs] We sitting doing nothing and just wonder [dog barks loudly in background] why waiting for the government to ... to make the next move. And we ... all want something. We all crying. We want this and we want that and so on. That time we had to march for it, had to fight for it. Now I think I I will prefer to live to relive that. But without the Apartheid regime [laughing].

S: Ja. Tell – just changing the topic a little bit, I mean -

G: Uh.

S: - tell me about having children. What was that like? Remember having your first child?

<0:08:29>

G: Oh having – I wasn't very excited.

S: Is it?

G: Uh uh. I wasn't a – I dunno man. I didn't think that my – I didn't make such a big fuss of having children. Maybe because I was m- left my mother at that time, you know? So it didn't really matter to me. And uh I'm amazed when I look at, sometimes look at the TV how people make a fuss of their children. [Dog panting in background] ... Did you see this dog's black tongue? [Laughing]

S: And what's with this ins- inspection? Just comes to looks at me [laughing].

G: No I wasn't excited about children.

S: Did you want to have children?

G: Ja, I did, actually. N- not that I wanted to, it just happened. But I I w- wouldn't actually have ... gone on crazy about it. [Dog panting]

S: Mm.

G: But today the parents are different. They maybe they think they – children will be b- have better futures if they if they fuss and ... bother. Some people spoil their children.

S: Mm.

G: As far as I'm concerned. And there's a lotta young mothers here too that don't know how to teach their children, you know? The old – all the morals that we had, is is gone by the looks of it.

S: Mm.

<0:07:09>

G: ... [Dog panting] Hey! [addressing dog]

S: [Laughs quietly]

G: Hey!

S: Um, and so what do your children do now, I mean ... n-

G: My one son is working in uh in some Arab country. The eldest son and he – he was ... teaching. He taught. And he left the teaching. And then he went on to the – He done a whole lotta different things. And he went on to Safmarine, to travel. And then he, then he travelled and then he went -

S: [Dog scratching? in background] Shhh...

G: - further.

S: Mm?

G: Further uh on. And now is uh – oh and then he was a chef. He learnt – uh can you remember the old Herengracht Hotel?

S: Mm mm.

G: There's where he trained as a chef. And now he's working in a ... in this Muslim country somewhere up in uh near Iran, somewhere there.

<0:06:06>

S: What the Emirates or something like that?

G: Emirates, ja.

S: Mm hm.

G: Some pipelines where they -

S: Mm.

G: - got all those all these different workers. He see that they get their proper food. Hey come on you just now break my glasses here. So he's there. The other one's got a wo- mechanic workshop. My daughter's a waitress in Simonstown.

S: Huh.

G: And her daughter stays – that's her daughter. Her daughter stays with me.

S: Mm.

G: But uh ... I I think that ... that our life our lives is – we much better off than ... than the Zimbabwean people. Look how they suffering, hey.

S: Sjoe.

<0:05:24>

G: God I feel sorry for that pe- and they so ... oh, they so creative.

S: Mm.

G: You know? And they and I dunno why why our people is fighting with them. The world is big enough for everybody.

S: Mm.

G: And they fighting with them and there the church that held them there in in in Si- and ag I'll Si- in uh Johannesburg. And then they were thrown out here. They lived at the back here too, some of them, near here.

S: Is it?

G: Blue – here in Kommetjie.

S: Zimbabweans or just o- other refugees?

G: All the refugees lived here at the back here.

S: Mm mm.

G: And there's some refu- some Zimbabweans staying here in Ocean View.

S: Mm.

G: People are – must be tolerant about each other.

<0:04:36>

S: Ja, it's terrible this xenophobia -

G: I don't like it.

S: - i- in the middle of our democracy hey?

G: In ja, and another thing, the world is so big.

S: Mm.

G: And it's like Africa's so massive, there's place for everybody.

S: Mm.

G: If you go around Strandfontein you see all that wetlands and that wild ... flowers and things there. They can make a little houses there for them. But uh um [radio softly in background] ... I I I still feel that – that we have forgotten, we forgotten. Because we also – went through the struggle. And now everybody's just thinking it's a it's one group of people that done it alone. And those some of those pe- the youngsters that's ... that's talking like that and making all this m- stupid demands and things. I don't think they were born already when we were having in the eighties [dog barking loudly in background] when we were having when we were having our our fight against Apartheid.

S: Mm. You talking about Julius Malema?

G: Ja, that time -

S: [indistinct]

G: - that those guys man. They really s- they really mad! But I think he really knows what he's doing. I think he wants ... he wants attention and he's getting the attention he wants.

<0:03:17>

S: [Laughing]

G: Getting the attention he want.

S: Mm mm mm. I think you're right! [Laughing]

G: He's getting the attention.

S: Ja. Mm. Um -

G: I saw him the other day on on um ... Third Degree. Is it Third Degree hey?

S: [Talking simultaneously] I saw that, I saw that, ja.

G: Hah! He actually made her laugh. [Laughing] He actually made her laugh with his questions.

S: Mm. Sjoe. Um. maybe we should stop for the day and then I'll -

G: Uh.

S: - come back. But thank thanks - so far it's been wonderful.

<0:02:48>

G: [Talking simultaneously] Listen here you know what?

S: Mm.

G: I'm thinking of our - do you know that [scratching noise, moving recording equipment?] Ashley Forbes and them - they were sentenced to de- uh to actually I think Ashley -

S: Mm?

G: - sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island when they were youngsters.

S: Mm.

G: And he married uh uh uh uh ... Z- what's her name, not Zubeida?

S: Ja?

G: He married in Polsmoor. They were married in Polsmoor, because they were there.

S: Mm hm.

G: And he's lucky that we got our democracy.

S: Mm.

G: Then they were all freed. But he married. This guy, his mother's a great friend of mine, Tina Forbes.

S: Mm hm.

<0:02:12>

G: That cat is gonna throw that -

- S: Ag it's ok. Mm.
- G: Tina, Tina Forbes -
- S: Oh ok, ok. That's the connection.
- G: You know her?
- S: No no no. But I know the – I mean I obviously know about her family.
- G: Ja. He married um [clicks tongue] ... What was Ashley's wife, they married in Polsmoor?
- S: Mm hm.
- G: It's almost like the it's not the Wynberg Seven but it's almost like the Wynberg Seven.
- S: Mm hm.
- G: They uh uh that's all the – we were very involved in the struggle and look at Ashley Kriel that was shot ...
- S: Mm.
- G: - point blank in in Crawf- hey! [talking to animal] in Crawford. <0:01:40>
- S: Mm hm hm. [Whispering to animal] Hey, hey hey!
- G: Come on! This c-
- S: [Laughs quietly]
- G: Get out [talking to cat?] We were very much involved. But thank goodness we were involved. Because now we all ... can do, got our freedom.
- S: Mm. Sjoe. Did you ever go to jail, I mean -
- G: Who?
- S: You.
- G: No, I was just thrown in a police van and I jumped out again!
- S: [Laughing]
- G: I should have stayed in there and then I would have gone to jail [laughing]. See what it is.
- S: Now everybody wants to be – kind of publicises the fact that they went to jail years ago [laughing]. <0:01:04>
- G: Ja, hey! They everybody wants to be on the bandwagon.
- S: Mm.

G: And you don't get none of these people that made Apartheid work, hey. These whities they all involved with the with the with the ... and all over the companies, there's some white person running it. They all involved. They ... they they I'm sure some of them never e- when I look at that thing too – that that drawer the other ni- other day I I love to watch these things.

S: Mm.

G: And I looked at it and I saw - that um that actress Charleen [sic] Theron.

S: Mm.

G: And she comes from from Benoni hey? Benoni, ja. She can't tell me her parents weren't involved in Apartheid because she look boer. She's a boer. Egte boer.

S: Mm hm.

G: And it's these boere that made all this bloody rules.

S: [Laughing]

G: Uh uh.

S: Ok, on a g- on that note let's stop for the day.

<0:00:00>

End of Wav file 1

Project: Displaced Lives Collection

Interviewee: Gladys Thomas (G)

Interviewer: Sean Field (S)

Date: 25/8 & 7/9/2008

Location: Guguletu, Cape Town

2 Wav files (40 & 1.09 mins)

Counter number	Wav file number	Subject
1:1:21 – 1:16:49	1	Born Salt River, Cape Town, 14 th December 1934. Lived with mother in Salt River until age six. Taken to father's family in Lakeside age six. Conflict between families, father coloured, mother Irish – both married to other people. Schooling: Dutch Reform School in Retreat up to Std 6. After Std 6 worked in sweet factory and shirt factory. Met husband Albert and moved to Simonstown 1950.
1:16:49 – 1:11:30	1	Cannot remember much of Salt River. Never met mother's family, never saw mother again after age six. Shirt factory in Wynberg. Wanted to be a nurse. Popular at school because of light skin. Massive house in Lakeside.
1:11:30 – 1:04:28	1	Father's blacksmith business. Mother and father's names. How they met. Mother had three older children married to another man. Father first took G to his oldest son in Victoria West. Father had 10 other children with his wife.
1:04:28 – 0:52:57	1	School – loved it, did well. Played with children from squatter camp nearby, coloured and African mixed. Now area for rich white people. Memories of Apartheid: cannot remember beginning. Drama group. How she met Albert.
0:52:57 – 0:45:02	1	Went to live in Simonstown in 1950s. Back and forth to Lakeside to stay with different relatives. Memories of her 'funny' wedding. Relationships with siblings. Church. Family meals. Language. Mixed neighbourhood.
0:45:02 – 0:34:40	1	Family moving around. G's children: two sons and a daughter. Forced removal from Simonstown to Ocean View, late 1960s. Rumour of Atlantis as 'coloured homeland'. (Emotional climax of interview.) Anger. Effects of forced removals on communities.
0:34:40 – 0:27:41	1	Experiences of race classification. Half sister passed for white, married a white artist. Picture of mother.
0:27:41 – 0:10:17	1	Writing: First poem: 'Fall tomorrow'. Published poems in book 'Cry rage' with James Matthews. Book banned. Fear of security police. Opinion of Richard Rive. Protest poetry, short stories and plays. Conflict with James Matthews. Still writing poetry for women. Invitation to read first poem in the interview - Cannot remember it. Involvement in political organisations. (Requests section to be deleted).
0:10:17 – 0:00	1	Husband's occupation as administrator for engineering firm. Living post-apartheid. Experiences of having children, children's occupations. Thoughts about post-apartheid South Africa: xenophobia, youth leaders, Ashley Forbes, white people not taking responsibility for the past.
0:00	1	End of Wav file 1