



English: Personal Experiences

Sindiwe Magona

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I had a long association with English but my home language is *IsiXhosa* and that's what I grew up you know using in my home until I went to school and but I did make some attempts at - at the language I could not fathom. I could not understand. Where I was born and where I spent the first five years of my life was village. And then there was this tar road that's made through the village. Later on I got to know it as the National Road. So if you are travelling between say from East *London* to Durban you would drive through my village. And there's kids running around butt naked you know we used to collect resin. Resin, tree, from the barks of trees. We eat this. Some resin is sweet and I don't remember ever you know I didn't know the word lollipop but we used to fashion a kind of lollipop you know and put this stick this gooey thing on a twig and then stand there as the motorists drove by which was not a – an everyday sight to see – you know - people driving through. These would be white people you know who had cars those days.

And then we would offer these and you know, they would stop and I don't know what they thought we were doing and then they would say – they would speak. Obviously you can see their lips move and sound coming out and not being you know backward in coming forward I responded in – in - in the gibberish I had. So my first English words were something like “sch schwen schwen schwen schwen” because that's what I had. I just had nonsense. And so I, but I started really you know my first English words in Sub A and Sub B which is Grade One and Grade At home we spoke *IsiXhosa*. My parents were not educated. And there was no way we were going to be even mixing. It was just *IsiXhosa* at home, English at school.

I fell in love with the language. I remember when I was doing Sixth Grade we were given homework to learn by heart by rote. You know, those days you know students or pupils used to recite poetry. We were given Wordsworth's “Daffodils” which now I understand if you go to any of the former British Colonies everybody has done the “Daffodils”. And we were given I think it has between four or six verses and we were to learn by heart verse one. Yours truly went home and by the next day I knew the whole long thing up to “And then my heart with pleasure fills – and dances with the daffodils.” I love language. I fell in love with the English language.