

ENTERTAINMENT – LATE 1950S TO THE 1960S

In between settling down in the new township and eking out a living, the residents of Tembisa found ways of entertaining themselves. Football, *stokvel*²⁸ and church services thrived.

Mr David Masina, who was born on a farm on the outskirts of Standerton, in the then Eastern Transvaal (today Mpumalanga Province) but had moved with his family to Benoni, in the East Rand, remembers that he used to visit Tembisa to play football. He explains:

In 1957 I came to visit on weekends while I was at school, because I was playing soccer this side. I was playing for a team from the airport called 'Sky Master'. And there was 'Consolation'. Teams were [named] after the company the players worked for. We were playing in a ground. It was easy to start up a ground. If it's Saturday and we wanted to play, they would tell you that you are going to open a ground, so you must come with a shovel. Then we would collect sticks and put them around and then it's a ground. And then we would pour white ash in the field²⁹

Timothy Mabena remembers that after church service on Sunday, he would request money from his parents to go to the stadium to watch football:

After church and lunch we boys would request our parents to give us money to pay entrance fee at the stadium to watch soccer (also known as football)³⁰

Football was a popular sport in the township to the extent that Lazarus Mawela's father when he arrived in Tembisa he established a football team. Lazarus Mawela recalls:

My dad bought football kit and formed a team, because he felt it would keep us busy. 'If boys are loitering they could get into mischief', he would say. So my home became a club house. My friends like Greg Malebo and I played football until we were promoted to the first division. Our team was called United Brothers³¹





Other popular sports were baseball, tennis and basketball for female enthusiasts³². *Dinaka* (cultural dance by BaPedi) was another form of entertainment which took place on Sunday.

Timothy Mabena remembers:

After church in the afternoon at about 2 o'clock we would gather at an open space where usually people played baseball, also known as cheap site trading stop, and watch as different groups compete. This was next to Tembisa Station³³

At this stage *stokvel* became another form of entertainment, as well as a money making scheme. Julius Lelaka, who was a regular patron in some of the *stokvels* in the township, remembers:

Stokvels on weekends. You entered with six beers. If a person had a *stokvel* you go there to support. It was the way to entertain yourself. There was music - Mbaqanga, Johnny Sticks' and John Coltrane's jazz. You saved money for alcohol and a plate of food later. For the first table, each comes with six beers. The person who's in charge would pop out a case of beers and a 'straight' on top of the alcohol that you brought. And when other people come and find that you are the first table they join in on your alcohol until the first table was finished. Then the second table follows. Maybe it's four beers each. There was this one that I liked. It was for people like Mr Mogungu. It was for people who had money. Those people would take a coffee table and put it close to the entrance. That coffee table they called it 'minus one'. It had all kinds of alcohol, wine, whisky, beer. Then you drink as much as you liked, because they knew that you won't last. After a short period of time you are out. They had cars. If you were drunk they would take you home³⁴

Church also played a pivotal role in people's lives at this stage. Timothy Mabena, whose father was a church minister and had his own church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church, remembers that Sundays were special days. In his words:

These were independent churches. Sunday was the most outstanding day for many people in the township, because you were served delicious food: chicken and rice, laced with beetroot. Finally, there was dessert: custard and jelly. On Sunday we wore the best clothes³⁵