



Mama Ice

By Enid Gayizana

How can I write my story? My name is Enid Gayizana and I stay in Khayelitsha. I am the mother of six children and a single parent as my husband died. I didn't have a job, that's why I took the chance of selling. If you know how to trade you can sell things to get bread. Few South African men do this job - they always undermine this, they always say it is a woman's job. But the money is the same. You can be a man or you can be a woman, but it's the same.

I am an informal trader. I trade informally at the taxi rank, on the pavement. That's what I like, that there are more people here and I look for where there are more people crossing the space so they can buy. Instead of getting a job, I just got more people to work for me. I was trying to be self-employed all the time. That is why I got hurt when I couldn't go further with the selling. I thought I was selling very nicely. It was a good chance for me, I was learning more, but I was stopped. South African women who must put bread on the table are few, but they do not want to encourage them. They close the door for them.

I started in 1987, selling ice at the taxi rank. The people here came to fetch me from the township because they were struggling to buy ice. That is where my interest in business began. I changed my business in 2000. I wanted to see what was working right through the year. I decided to cook, to make coffee and sandwiches. In winter they buy, in summer they buy – people never get tired of food. So I carried on nicely, nicely, nicely! I loved it. The more people came to me, the more recipes came to my mind - until I was stopped in 2007 and it was a big shock to me.

When we were chased away (the police) said they are going to re-new the taxi rank. The pavement was broken, so we agreed very easily. I was waiting for my stand to get finished. But in a few days we were told to move out again for good. This man brought us some forms to fill to apply for a permit but those blocks of yellow lines on the pavement? They made space for only 88 traders - out of the 300 stalls that were here before, which means a whole lot of traders were driven away. This is when the problems started.

It was said all the cooking people must wait for a place to be given for them. We waited and we waited until the year was finished. So that's when I thought "no." I was really, really starving now. The big problem was my stomach, my children's stomach. Worst of all, I also had a child doing a first year at college. The child stopped because she couldn't write exams with an unpaid bill. So I joined the others who from the beginning hadn't stopped and came to trade in the evenings. I changed my business again to crisps and cool drinks. I'm that person now taking chances.

We were told about 2010 that's coming, that there would be no stands there. I'm very scared now because I do not know what 2010 is going to bring to me. 2010 had a meaning for me but I have a worry now because I won't be trading. I'm cut off and I'm not told where to put my stall. No one instructs me to say, "You will be right if you stand here."

2010 means a lot to me. And I do not know if I lose my opportunity now, where I can find myself in the future. I am also interested to be part of history, to say,

“Oh yes, that 2010 gave us such an opportunity.” I still remember, when South Africa was chosen for 2010, we were jumping at home, shouting, “More jobs are coming, more jobs are coming!” We were so really glad. My husband was still alive that year. He used to say that, in 2010, nobody would be suffering because there would be more jobs. Maybe because he was older than me, he had a vision about it. As I am sitting here today...I can't see jobs here.

I heard this on the radio: the procedure for the ANC is that you just get up and do it for yourself, just get up and be independent. Do not wait for the government to give you a job. This is what the ANC government says: “*Vuka zenzele* – wake up and do something! Do something for yourself.” I wanted to call them and ask, “What about the government coming to move you from the place you are doing business, and not showing you the right place?” Now wherever you put your stall, the government closes you there. Why do they push us out of a wrong place and not put you in a right place, instead of chasing you out for good? This is my point: when they are shutting us down, they are closing our stomachs.

● **Writers Bio**

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