

## Episode 56: Mafalala

### Summary

Nick and Wendy talk about visiting the Mozambican capital Maputo and, in particular, the historic and fascinating Mafalala neighbourhood.

### Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are coming to you from Maputo, which is the capital of Mozambique, as we continue our trip in southern Africa. And as far as large African capitals go, Maputo is reasonably pleasant, would you say?

Wendy: Yes, definitely reasonably pleasant. I mean generally, big African cities are not the best parts of Africa, but, yeah, this is a nice city. It's an enjoyable place to walk around.

Nick: And so yesterday morning we did just that. We walked around a little bit in the centre of the city. Uhh, we went to the train station, which is a very beautiful train station, and apparently it's the third most beautiful train station in the world.

Wendy: According to TIME magazine.

Nick: But the locals here are very proud of that, so they have a museum display which lets you know that it is the third most beautiful railway station in the world. We also went to a fort which was quite nice, uhh, we went to a market and we did all these sorts of things. But one of the things we really wanted to do here was to do a walking tour of an area called Mafalala. And we'd read about this and we'd heard that this was an excellent tour. It's put on<sup>1</sup> by a cultural association, and Mafalala is not the centre of town, it's a very specific neighbourhood north of the centre of town. And so we ... if we didn't go on this tour, we probably wouldn't have even heard of this area firstly, let alone<sup>2</sup> known how to get there or what to do there or understood if we were safe going there and things like that.

Wendy: Yeah.

Nick: And so we saw it as an opportunity to discover this neighbourhood that we otherwise wouldn't have known about or wouldn't have visited. So today we did a walking tour for three hours in Mafalala. The tour was in Portuguese, and we speak

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<sup>1</sup> put on (phrasal verb): organised, managed (usually relating to an event)

<sup>2</sup> let alone: not to mention, much less, without even considering.

Portuguese well enough. Uhh, it was a little bit of a challenge, but we certainly understood the key parts to it, and it was a really fascinating tour.

Wendy: It was. I'm so glad that we did it. That is definitely a place where we wouldn't have gone on our own, and, so just walking around there alone was fascinating, but then learning about the history of the city through the history of this neighbourhood in particular, I learned so much about Mozambique. I feel like I really understand the country a lot better and understand the way of life of the people in Mafalala.

Nick: Right, and so the very existence of Mafalala is ... owes itself<sup>3</sup> to the colonial period where the Portuguese rulers had set up the centre of the city for themselves, essentially, and this was the white part of the city. And Mafalala was then the black part of the city.

Wendy: Right. So all of the blacks had to live in Mafalala. They were only allowed to go into the white area of town in order to work, and they had to carry a card with them that gave the name of their boss and their working hours. And they were only allowed in during their working hours and then they had to go back to Mafalala.

Nick: Yeah, and another really interesting thing is that they had to build their houses in Mafalala out of only materials like wood and tin<sup>4</sup>.

Wendy: Yes, so the buildings in the white section were made of cement, uhh, and were very sturdy constructions, and in the black area, in Mafalala, yes, all of the buildings were made out of wood and sheets of tin. And you still see lots and lots of buildings, probably the majority of the buildings that we saw today in Mafalala, were made, still, out of wood and tin.

Nick: Yeah, I mean they're allowed to use cement now if they want to, but, yeah, there was a lot of tin still in that area. And so this lasted from the late nineteenth century all the way up until the mid-to-late twentieth century, that there was this separation, uhh, up until 1960, I believe.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm, yep.

Nick: And what was also interesting was that even within this so-called black area, there were divisions among the people there as well. So there was segregation<sup>5</sup> within the segregation to a certain degree.

Wendy: Yeah, it's actually a very diverse community that lived in Mafalala and that still lives there today, because, umm, well - I've been saying 'blacks', as in black Mozambicans - but there are actually lots of different ethnicities that are

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<sup>3</sup> owes itself: its existence is because of

<sup>4</sup> tin: metal often cut into corrugated sheets, poor construction material

<sup>5</sup> segregation: separation, typically between races

represented throughout Mozambique, which is a very large country. There are twenty-two different languages that are spoken by the local people here. And so you had blacks that were local to Maputo but then you also had blacks that were from different ethnicities and that came from the central areas and the northern areas of the country. And then you also had other types of people that were kind of a mix of black and white. Do you want to explain a bit about those?

Nick: Yeah, those are what they called *mestiço*, and so it's people typically who had a Portuguese father and a local Mozambican mother. And so then they were mixed, so then they were neither black nor white, and so kind of in the middle. Umm, and that wasn't really a great place for them to be.

Wendy: No.

Nick: And then there was another group of people who were the black people who were assimilated<sup>6</sup> more into the white culture. And it's a little bit unclear to us exactly how this worked, but they were people who had a white education despite being black and so they were known to be like this and then the colonial rulers would come to their houses in Mafalala and make sure that they were acting like white people.

Wendy: Right, and they were given a certificate to say that ... to prove that they were assimilated, meaning that they were black Mozambicans who had taken on the customs of white people. So they would speak Portuguese in their homes, they would wear European clothing, uhh, they studied, you know, like Europeans did. Umm, and so this was what was known as being assimilated. They still didn't have all the same rights as the whites.

Nick: Right, they were still made to live in Mafalala.

Wendy: Right, for example. But I believe that they didn't have to carry the card that others had to carry in order to go into the white section of town. They were allowed to go in whenever they wanted but then they had to come back to their homes and sleep in Mafalala. So they had some rights and privileges over other blacks, and there was a lot of tension, actually, between them and the other blacks because they were sometimes seen as spies for the white government and they would, you know, tell on<sup>7</sup> their fellow blacks who were living in Mafalala, umm, if they were doing something that was not allowed. So, yeah, a very very interesting mix of different kinds of people living in Mafalala.

Nick: Right, and then the final group were these so-called second generation whites, which is really extraordinary that they were ... they had Portuguese parents but they were born either in Mozambique or one of the other Portuguese colonies,

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<sup>6</sup> assimilated: incorporated, adapted

<sup>7</sup> tell on (phrasal verb): report someone for bad behaviour (often used by kids)

and even that meant that they didn't have the same rights as the Portuguese people.

Wendy: Yeah.

Nick: And so a lot of the mothers, knowing that they were pregnant, would have to go back to Portugal to give birth in Portugal, then to come back, just so the child was born in Portugal and not born in Mozambique, and that would change the rights of the child.

Wendy: Yeah, so if ... as long as<sup>8</sup> the child was born in Portugal they would be considered Portuguese, uhh, like first generation or first line Portuguese. But if they were born in Africa, then they were considered second line Portuguese and that meant they had to live in Mafalala and had other restrictions. So they were not considered to be of the same social class.

Nick: Right, so this is the neighbourhood that we walked through today. And it's still a very poor neighbourhood, I would say. There's basically one paved road<sup>9</sup> that goes through the middle of it. And all the other roads are just dirt roads, dirt paths. Umm, like we said, a lot of the houses are made of tin. Some of them are quite nice within that 'made of tin' category, that are houses that had existed during the segregation period, and then they were considered the elite houses, but some of the other houses are just really, umm, really poor. And so it's described in the brochure of the company that gives the walking tour as a 'historic slum<sup>10</sup>'.

Wendy: Right.

Nick: And, yeah, it is a little bit like a slum, yeah.

Wendy: Yeah, I think that's probably a fair word to use. Umm, although we were told that some people, uhh, who live in these tin houses, tin and wood houses, it's not necessarily because they don't have the money to build a cement house. It's because they're proud of their origins, they're proud of being from Mafalala, and that's their family home and they want to keep it the way it is. So that's great to see that pride there, too.

Nick: Yep, and so we visited all sorts of places. There are fifteen mosques in Mafalala and only two churches, which is quite interesting in a Christian country. We visited a school, umm, where there are sixty to seventy students per classroom. And they actually have a thousand students in the school, and they have to divide the school day into three parts. So each student actually only goes

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<sup>8</sup> as long as: provided that

<sup>9</sup> paved road: sealed road, road that has been laid with bitumen or asphalt to make it easier and smoother to drive on than a dirt road

<sup>10</sup> slum: area with very basic living conditions, where people live in poverty

to school for only two or three hours a day at that school, umm, because they just don't have the room or the facilities to house all of these students.

Wendy: Yeah, so, I mean, comparing it to the school that I went to in the United States, you know, it's very poor conditions but, umm, apparently it used to be a lot worse. And the company or the association that runs these tours, part of the money that they earn from the tours they put back into the school. And so they showed us, for example, the desks that they had bought for the children, because previously the children were just sitting on the floor.

Nick: Yeah, and they also built a library, umm, with quite a lot of books now, up to a thousand books I think.

Wendy: I'm not sure how many, but, uhh, yeah, they have books in Portuguese and English, apparently some in Japanese too, because some Japanese tourists donated some books. Umm, yeah, hopefully they have a way to, you know, study the language if they want to, to be able to use those books. But anyway, they're doing a lot for the community and, uhh, that was great to be a part of that.

## Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Mafalala come to exist?
2. Who were the four groups of people who had to live in Mafalala during colonial rule?
3. The cultural association that runs the walking tours puts money back into a school in Mafalala. Which two things did Nick and Wendy mention that the association helped the school with?

## Exercises

*Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.*

1. The hotel doesn't even have electricity, \_\_\_\_\_ Internet access.
2. She grew up in a \_\_\_\_\_ in India but she managed to stay in school and earn a university scholarship, and now she is a very successful businesswoman.
3. A lot of slums contain houses that have been put together haphazardly using sheets of \_\_\_\_\_ and other basic materials.
4. If you keep being naughty, I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_ you to your parents.
5. We're going to the beach tomorrow, \_\_\_\_\_ the weather is good.
6. In some parts of Africa, it's actually better to drive on a dirt road than a \_\_\_\_\_, because the latter can have a lot of potholes.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ in schools existed in parts of the southern United States until the late 1960s.
8. Ted's father never really \_\_\_\_\_ into the life and culture of North America. He always longed to return to Taiwan.
9. The West African country of Liberia \_\_\_\_\_ to freed African-American slaves who returned to Africa and founded the country.
10. In many different countries, a Chinese New Year festival is \_\_\_\_\_ by the various Chinese Cultural Associations that exist in those countries.

## Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Would you be interested in visiting Maputo and Mafalala? Why or why not?
2. How do the conditions at the school you went to compare with the school in Mafalala that Nick and Wendy described?
3. What other examples of racial segregation can you think of? How do they compare with the example of Mozambique?

## Answers

### Comprehension Questions

1. Mafalala was established by the Portuguese colonial rulers of Mozambique as the black area of Maputo, separate from the area where the Portuguese lived.
2. The blacks, the assimilated blacks, the *mestiços* (mixed-race people) and the second line Portuguese.
3. They bought desks for the classrooms and built a library.

### Exercises

1. let alone
2. slum
3. tin
4. tell on
5. as long as
6. paved road
7. segregation
8. assimilated
9. owes itself
10. put on