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JF A bit about your background - you are from a liberal English speaking family in the Cape?

A Ja, I am from C.T. and my father is a Professor at the university of Cape Town, my mother is from England; and so I was brought up.. I mean they were always firm sort of PFP supporters and I was brought up in that sort of liberal environment.

JF Did you yourself ever want to join the PFP or get involved?

A Not really, my brother was always more interested in formal politics and parliament and what was going on in that way. When I was in about Std. 7/8 I helped one of the PFP in the elections; a little bit but I was never really involved at that level.

JF And did you, had you heard of someone like Helen Suzman or did you think she was an important person?

A Ja, sure.

JF What was your image of her?

A I mean I saw her as somebody who was I suppose trying to get people rights, or somebody who was basically involved in justice or concerned with justice which I didn't have any clear conception of at that stage of politics and of extra parliamentary politics at all. But I was brought up in an environment where apartheid was something that we didn't like, which was considered wrong and unjust. And I suppose we were brought up seeing the PFP as some..as a group doing what it could to work against that injustice.

I mean I don't remember having any strong feelings about Helen Suzman or like particularly identifying her as somebody I would look up to.

JF Do you remember having any feelings about the PFP? Did you figure those were the good guys?

A Ja, definitely. The thing is one is brought up seeing parliamentary politics as the only form of politics there is and within that context the PFP was definitely the good guys.

JF And did you have any discussions that you remember, why there were no blacks in parliament?

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A No, but I was aware of the fact that blacks did not have a vote. I mean I was aware of that for a long time.

JF Do you remember ever seeing the PFP only going so far? Was there a juncture where you began to see them as not totally adequate or how did that happen? Why didn't you just try to get involved in the PFP?

A I can't remember a specific point where I started to have doubts about the PFP but I didn't really see myself as getting involved in politics at that level. Only when I started varsity and I got fully involved in my first year at varsity I started analysing the role that the PFP was playing; before that I was generally sympathetic towards them but I was more interested in other things.

I had some contact with the Womens Movement for Peace and the Black Sash while I was at school. We tried to organise a discussion group and we invited someone from Black Sash to come and speak at school., about influx control and that sort of things. But I was never really involved in the PFP as such.

JF Sorry did you say that there was..or then how would you describe your movement? I mean what..how did you shift? How did you become involved and what did you do?

A Well, when I went to varsity in my first year I got involved firstly in writing for Varsity, the student newspaper mainly because at that stage I wanted to be a journalist and I thought journalism was what I was interested in and I liked writing and I wanted to get involved in that way. But I also joined the Wages Commission which was a small group at UCT concerned with trade unions, mainly. Providing resources for trade unions; making up issues like strike support and that sort of thing.

And I got very involved from my first year in that. I think it was because I had some conception of wanting to be involved with real people; with blacks and wanting to find out more and to get to know about them rather than being involved in high profile official politics, which was always discussed in my house. My brother and parents used to discuss PFP and the National Party and so on ad nauseum and I was never really interested in that. I am not sure exactly why but I was quite interested in workers and actually speaking to people and finding out how they lived and that sort of thing.

I got involved in Wages Comm and I think the ... we went to some forms of theoretical training; reading papers about workers rights and



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A the type of legislation going through parliament, the Weehan Commission and that sort of thing. But the other things we did which were much more practical were interviewing Ice cream vendors who were migrant workers from the Ciskei mainly and we had a questionnaire and we had to go round and survey and speak to them about their conditions of work and their contracts, wages, etc. which is incredibly important. I mean I don't think we helped the ice cream vendors at all apart from writing a few articles exposing their conditions of work but for us it was an incredibly important process of speaking to those people and actually realising how they lived. And then there was a ... well, that was 1980 and it was incredibly important year politically in terms of organisation etc. and what happened was that there was a schools boycott in the Western Cape which covered then all the coloured schools and most of the African schools as well.

The SRC responded to that and called on students to boycott and so I was very involved in boycotting and so on. And almost immediately after that there were the huge strike at meat companies in C.T., organised by the General Workers Union and because I was in Wages Comm we got invited onto the Strikers Support Committee which consisted of the (all) community organisations and trade unions and asked to organise and mobilise support for the strikers.

That was in a sense a turning point for me because it was an incredibly high level sort of involvement which I don't think I was really prepared for. I mean I had only been involved for a few months at varsity and basically we were working with community organisations. We were going out and raising money for workers and really feeling that we were doing something concrete and materially to help people in the struggle. And that was the turning point for me really.

JF At that turning point do you think you had a clear point of what the role of whites should be?

A No t really at all. I think at that stage I was very much in a sense conscious/concerned with what in one sense is a ultra leftist idea which did not see the importance really of organising on white community but very much concerned with concretely helping black organisations worker organisations, and I remember one very important thing for me. When I had to write an article for Varsity on the...before the actual strike took place, but on the meat industry and the strike which was blowing up at that time. And I remember things just slotting into place. This whole analysis of the black working class and the under-

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A standing of class analysis; how that fitted into racial oppression. And all that came together in that article and what the government was trying to do with the unregistered unions. Trying to keep the unregistered unions outside any processes of bargaining etc. And that strike was very important because basically the union was fighting for an unregistered union to be recognised by the management. Which they lost in the end but that was why it was important. And I remember that as being very crucial. Just things slotting into place. And having a broad understanding of what was going on and why it was important.

JF Do you have that article?

A I must have it somewhere at home but it is in an old Varsity - go and look in the Varsity Archives.

JF And then what was next? What involvements did you have?

A Well I got involved...at the end of that year the SRC tried to persuade me to stand for SRC (Telephone)

I remember at that time feeling firstly I was not ready to stand for the SRC. I had only been involved for 7 months or so at varsity and I also remember feeling quite skeptical of SRC politics and white student politics as such: being more interested in being more involved in trade unions and I was really into my Wages Comm work at that stage. So I didn't stand for SRC that year and at the end of that year a whole group of us went up to Zimbabwe which is also incredibly exciting. We went up in a combi and we did a sort of research tour where we each took a different area and interviewed people and spoke to people and found out...we took, looked at housing and land distribution and woman and political rights and couple of other areas. I did the things on land. So basically it was reading up and finding out what was going on in terms of land distribution and how the land had been divided before independence and whether in fact people, the peasants after independence were actually getting more land and all the problems involved in that.

I am not going to go into that but that was also an incredibly exciting thing. And we came back and put together this whole publication which we had to research ourselves and write up, lay out and print

and so on, which was also amazing. I mean really exciting thing to do.



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JF Was it encouraging or disillusioning or...?

A We were very optimistic at that stage. We thought things were wonderful in Zimbabwe; we just got that impression, it was a year after independence and there was incredible feeling of optimism and enthusiasm among most of the people we spoke to. And I remember some people at varsity being quite skeptical of what we had written and our views but, which later proved to be correct I think. But we were very excited at that time.

JF Do you remember having any sense about this is what S.A. will be like afterwards? Did you feel that this gave you some insight into what you were working for in S.A.?

A I didn't think in a general sense sort of socio economically but very much there was a feeling of equality there and a lack of the incredible inhibition in terms of racial relations and so on which is obvious in S.A. which was very nice. Because I think we went there and established ourselves as a group of progressive people who were really trying to find out what was going on and we were treated as comrades. I mean we were called comrades by all the Zimbabweans which was incredibly encouraging. It was a big kick for us to have that experience.

JF Do you remember thinking at all of the role of whites? I keep coming back to that because that is my thesis. Did you see any whites that you thought about now this is the way it should be or did you see attitudes of blacks towards whites, that you thought were good?

A Well, what..the main impression we got..we stayed at a farm with an uncle of one of the people we were with and it was a typical white Rhodesian farm. It still had these huge metal fences up outside to keep out the terrorists and they were incredibly racist and they still had their farm labourers who were paid very badly and so on. Their attitudes had not changed at all and that was...I think we were struck by the fact the white population had been left behind to such an extent that they just did not know what was going on and they still had this incredible racism and antagonism to things, which was quite shocking. I suppose..I don't think we consciously analysed it but

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A and actually start thinking about things and taking sides now and I mean in a general that we can't wait until independence till we realise who the people's leaders are and the people's organisations are.

JF And after that Zimbabwe experience what were your involvements?

A My next year at varsity I was still involved in Wages Comm and I got also involved in that year in teaching literacy. There was a group in C.T called Adult Learning Project teaching...

JF Why did you do that? <sup>Why</sup> Did you think that was interesting? I thought you said you would be interested in journalism?

A I was not interested in teaching as such but I had read something about Paulo Freire and his whole theory of conscientisation and so on. And because I was involved in trade unions and working with workers I really was interested in that aspect of literacy and communication I suppose.

And just a friend of mine who was on the SRC had done a literacy course with somebody else; Karl Van Holt, who was starting up the Adult Learning Project and so, he had started up this project in Crossroads, taken it over from a church project and it had expanded rapidly and he didn't have other people to teach and he didn't have anyone else who he could draw on and he had about 30 people he was trying to teach at once. So I basically got pulled in without any background or training in that area; he just showed me how he was working with people. This is teaching English basically, sort of English as a second language. In a very practical sense teaching people; the first series of lessons we did was about housing, for eg you would have a picture of people building a shack in Crossroads and then you would ask what are they doing? And get people to use a structure, like she is building a house, they are watching, the dog is sitting on the ground and that sort of thing.

And we did a whole course which was all material we worked on ourselves. Going through themes of housing, and shopping and so on. And transport and looking at people's problems; eventually doing things on things like community organisation etc. It did not lead to very much, I mean we did not build any organisations or anything in Crossroads, but it was also a very important experience for me, in terms of being able to speak to people who are living in those conditions and feeling really in touch at a very grass roots level without any



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A sort of idealistic sort of political ideas about what the people think or what the people want. Actually getting a really concrete feel for that which was amazing. And I carried on teaching there it was just teaching in the evenings, three a week, in that year. In the next year I taught another group in Nyanga who were mainly members of trade unions of the General Workers Union which was a more advanced level where I was actually reading with them things about the history of S.A., of history of mining and the development of capitalism and the working class in S.A. just in a very simple form. But which was also very exciting work to be doing.

I also worked for a bit in the General Workers Union Advice Bureau which was basically Saturday mornings; helping workers with legal problems and things like pensions etc.

But also I stayed involved with...in student politics; in the Wages Comms and that year there was the Wilson Rowntrees strike where we organised a boycott of Wilson Rowntree sweets on campus which was also quite extensive organisational effort.

At the end of that year I stood for the SRC as the..and was elected onto the SRC and became the media officer. I had been interested in the whole area of media work. Well, since I started varsity really but in Wages Comm work and involved in the Media Committee which was also part of the SRC, in basic processes like putting out pamphlets and posters around all these campaigns etc. and learning how to write and lay out and geographics and that, print them and operate the printing press etc. So when I was on the SRC as the Media Officer I was responsible for the printing press and we printed like crazy. Like 1000<sup>cf</sup> pamphlets for these strikes and boycotts and so on.

So that was the other main area of my involvement at varsity was on that level, which in a sense was also not really directly concerned with ~~black~~ white politics because my main area was helping other organisations with media, printing and putting out pamphlets etc. So I was never really completely in student politics except when I was on the SRC, obviously to a certain extent one has to be concerned with SRC elections; with actually reaching your campus constituents, which is largely white and getting their support.

JF And after that? This was still in varsity then?

A Ja.

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JF rest of varsity?

A Then that was at the end of 2nd year; my third year I was on the SRC and in that year we took up a big campaign around the issue of the extension of conscription, which was extended in '82 to two full years plus additional camps for National Service and I think it was ..well we had a lot of debate around that issue, how we could take it up amongst students, about how important it was. I think it was then that I started developing an idea about the importance of organising in the white community and the importance of their resistance to the military and to the government and reverse it..I mean the point was that we realised that National Service was an issue that really affected white students and which they were really concerned about; because it affected them personally. It disrupted their lives and there were very unhappy about it so we found we got a tremendous response from students to a meeting we called around the extension of conscription. We realised we actually had to work in that area, that it is...well, I felt this is the crucial area which concerned white students and that there was no way that we could avoid it and I think it was then that, when I started focusing attention more on organisation within NUSAS, within student organisation. Although I was still teaching at that time.

JF And it was not that you came to it as a man does because he gets a call up paper; for you it was more of a theoretical....importance?

A Ja, I think so except that obviously I mean, even if one is not a man, you are affected by it. I mean my brother had to go into the army. A very close friend of mine came back from the border and he was, he had written a diary there, he read me extracts from it and he was really fuked in the head you know; he really was affected by this; and permeated his whole life and a lot of my brothers friends and a lot of friends of mine, their whole lives are dominated by the issue of the military and how they were going to get out of it or how they hated being there and so on. So it did have a...it obviously affected me personally as well.

My parents were always like against conscription; they were against the SADF; they did not want my brother to go but they saw it as

something they could not avoid; he would have to do it and so on. So it was partly a personal thing but I think also it was a realisation



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A that in terms of white student organisation, that if we were going to be successful it was crucial that we organise students around that issue.

JF It is interesting that movement..because I mean why didn't you start in the G W U Advice Office and move into the unions and work with blacks and what pulled you to the white public? Did you ever think, you had been in Wages Comm, you saw the workers as important, did you ever think that your place was ever in helping black workers of the working class only? How did you move to white politics?

A I think it was because at UCT your left student community is quite small and insular and if one gets fully involved in it, you are accountable to that group and in a sense you have to work in terms of the direction that that student movement is going in and I had developed certain skills working in the media committee and so on. And it was obviously important that I used those skills as effectively as I could and which meant working on the SRC etc. I was prepared to do that; I did not have problems working at that level at all. And I think while I was on the SRC I started to, with the other people, who were working on the SRC, you develop more and more of an understanding of working with students, white students. Then at the end of that year I was elected to go and work at NUSAS Head Office as Secretary General, which was a sort of National Office. This meant I, on the one hand being based in C.T. and basically sort of doing administrative work for NUSAS, but it meant an incredible amount of political contact with other organisations and with students as well. It was incredibly satisfying because it was almost a combination of roles: I stopped teaching then because I couldn't really carry on while I was in NUSAS because it meant, on the one hand that was the year when the UDF was established...(Ok go on.) I was saying what is incredible about the Eastern Cape is that altho' there has been very little white organisation here, and very little white involvement, in fact when I came to the Eastern Cape there were only 3 people I think who were vaguely involved. That there is an incredibly high level of acceptance and it is almost a total acceptance of a non racial position and an understanding that if whites want to get involved they will do their utmost to make you feel that you are meant to feel involved but you have to stick with them; that there is no question of questioning you motives or why or what are you doing here? There is a full acceptance of involvement

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A which is remarkable given the fact that there is no liberal university here and there are no students who have been working on this for years and years and building up relations with organisations in the way that they have in C.T. It is quite different.

JF Just finish up where you..can you remember where you were.

A Ja, I was saying that when I was in NUSAS office it was the year that the UDF was being formed so on the one hand I had a lot of contact with community organisations, there, the organisations which were becoming part of the UDF, discussions with them about how it was going to be formed, and why it was important that NUSAS was involved in UDF etc. At the same time NUSAS was going through quite a difficult period and we had two referendums at Pietermaritzberg and Rhodes and so we had to travel around and urge students to vote in favour of NUSAS. Then we had this whole issue at the end of the year of the white referendum where we had to vote on the new constitution.

There was a lot of debate about how we as a progressive organisation should handle that issue. What we should call on students to do etc. So it was an involvement on the one hand at quite a high level in that area of white politics, on the other hand it was quite an involvement in setting up the UDF which was an incredibly important initiative and it held a lot of communication, discussion and contact with extra parliamentary groups. (Black groups?) Ja.

JF Ja, I am taking a long time on your personal history and after that did you finally graduate?

A No, I graduated before I worked for NUSAS. I did three years at varsity and I finished and worked for NUSAS full time for a year, as Secretary.

JF And then after that?

A That was '83 and at the end of '83 I had to work out what I was going to do next and on the one hand, I had an option of staying in NUSAS and working as the Natal Organiser but I actually felt that I should move out of NUSAS. I had been involved for 4 years in student politics and I felt that I wanted to move on and get involved somewhere else and because I had been involved in media



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A and education work and I had had some contact with P.E., very very brief contact, it was clear that there was a complete lack of that type of resource and education work going on here, so I discussed with ALP and with people in C.T. the idea of setting up an education project here and tried to raise funding for that and then I came up here beginning of last year. Of '84, to set up this project.

JF So you were kind of a pioneer out here?

A It was a completely new area; I didn't know anybody here at all. And I had to start from scratch, like building up relations with people etc.

JF Did you feel nervous or kind of like you were making a sacrifice to come out here, you didn't have the community, friends, it has a reputation of being kind of heavy?

A I did not feel I was making a sacrifice; I felt a bit nervous but it was so exciting; it was nice to move into a completely new area.

JF Ok, let me take you back, that year of UDF being founded it seems that you made those choices about what your involvement should be as a white, but do you think that UDF itself

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JF Give incidents, it is helpful.

So my question is again I am just wondering about your clarity about the role of whites and the fact that you worked in the trinity but also understanding the need to organise whites. Do you think UDF was important or were you already there and that just confirmed it?

Do you think for whites generally UDF was a kind of boost?

You know there were the 70s where whites did feel very uneasy about the whole, and then by the early 80s it all seemed to change.

A I think UDF was incredibly important in that it was a sort of final bringing together of all organisations etc which identified themselves as non racial and it asserted the fact that whites had a role to play in that broad organisational front and in the...what was going to become the most powerful extra parliamentary political force. From the start it <sup>was</sup> asserted that it was very important that

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A that whites be involved in that and that they had a role to play. So I think UDF was important in that sense.

I don't think for me personally it was a step in any sense because I had been working in that way in the Western Cape for quite a long time; that NUSAS was involved with other organisations and you know the black student organisations, we had very good relations so it wasn't a sort of break through, in that way. But it was a fight, the thing was that in the W. Cape you have got a lot of ultra leftist groups which are fairly small but some of them are quite.. like one of the trade unions there, the Municipal Workers Union, and they were very opposed to NUSAS' involvement in what was going to be formed because they always said that NUSAS is liberal; that it is the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie and they come from wealthy families and we don't want their influence on our organisation. Agh there were all sorts of arguments; we are going to build up dependency relations and they are going to use their resources to control us and they are aligned with the bourgeoisie and their class interests are with the ruling class and we don't want them to be part of this group.

We went through numerous debates and battles to..for NUSAS to be accepted as part of the UDF, which is was in the end.

JF And there it was white, it was all a class thing; did you feel, was it anti white at all? Do you think it was clearly a left, ultra left class analysis?

A For some of them it was a white thing but for some of them it was a there was some element of racism there. For them it was a genuine I think incorrect analysis of this situation or a lack of understanding of the importance of why we should have, why we should try and value as many groups as possible...

JF What would your argument be? Were you always clear or did they make you think or what was your answer as to why NUSAS should be involved?

A Well we developed quite a sophisticated analysis which we put forward at that stage to people about the importance of..we said look on the one hand NUSAS' leadership is clearly progressive in the sense that it shares the same analysis as the leadership of other black organisations and there is no question about that. Our base, the student we are trying to organise and get involved they are liberal students



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A they are from bourgeois backgrounds but we don't think that should stop them from being involved in the struggle for democracy in S.A. at this point. We said that we felt it was clear that the struggle would be under the control and the direction of the organisations which were based in the community and the working class, if you like. But that even if students were liberal we felt it was incredibly important that we brought them with us so that... There were a lot of arguments; one was the argument of neutralising people in a situation where they have to actually have to make a choice; either they support the ruling class or they support..if they support the government or the state or they support the people and what is going on but they should make a choice to support the people. Even if it is against their class interests or against their personal backgrounds, which is what all of us go through. I mean we..I think a fairly small percentage of people at university are the children of the bourgeoisie as such, but we all go through a process of to some extent, breaking away from our backgrounds and our parents and from our very sheltered upbringing and we felt that it was incredibly important that people do that; that people make that break. So that was the argument that we used; it was like dividing the ruling class.

JF That shows where you should go but does that..is that very convincing in terms of what you have to offer to the struggle?

A Well, I think it is convincing in that we felt for eg. around an issue like the military. That it is incredibly important that as large a section as possible of the conscriptive community which is white, actually express some resistance of that sort of conscription. And why we felt it was important (Telephone)...

JF No, I guess I always wondered what possible...were people nervous; that it was too hot an issue? What would be the reasons to not? I mean surely that is the basic, if you have any trouble justifying your existence as a politico, a white politico, conscription is the thing that seemingly all blacks see for it; that idea of the rallying around?

A You see, I think what happened was that there was a very small group called MILCOM which was taking up this issue and it became seen as something which was actually jeopardising NUSAS and jeopardi-

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A jeopardising this building a legal, legitimate student movement on campus. And in addition you had a situation where your progressive or left leadership of the student movement at that stage was very small, of the white student movement. And it was quite elitist in its approach but they were also working from an understanding that where one could build white activists, committed white democrats, that they should stay and work in the country and work in organisation and build up organisation. And if they had to go and leave the country or go into exile that would be incredibly detrimental to the activity.

That lead to a situation where there was a line that student leadership should actually participate in the army or strategically participate. I think it was about 81 or so that we started re assessing that and saying look, this is obviously an issue that affects our constituency, if we genuinely want to get that constituency involved, and we see that this is something which affects them, and which we want to mobilise them around in some way; and we see the inherent importance of mobilising them around; in effect not using it as a trick to get them involved in other organisational activity, but genuinely seeing the importance of organising against the military as such, then we can't have our leaders going into the army. It was as simple as that. That we would have to, if we wanted to broaden or resistance to the military we would have to be consistent in our approach. So that was the one debate.

I think during 82, when conscription was extended and we got such support for that, for our stand on that in C.T. that the student movement nationally, NUSAS, started discussing this issue and coming to an understanding that they would have to take up the issue and reach out to students on the role of the SADF and what it was actually doing. Obviously we can't say to people we mustn't go into the army but we can expose exactly what the SADF is doing, and the role it is playing and the role that the system of conscription is playing. You have probably been into the whole ECE and its origins etc, but that was the logical outcome of that.

JF Ok, again thinking of you now, putting you in a certain place, I think I should pursue more, coming to the Eastern Cape. When you were in E.T. did you ever have any experiences that made you realise, make you think, there are risks involved in doing political work? Did you ever get scared, did you have friends detained, did you get detained or anything like that? Or did you not have any trouble?



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A I had a bit of trouble. The one thing was that we did a big picket about 48 people, in town. There was an international meat bosses conference just after this meat strike had taken place and we all went and demonstrated outside this conference, which I don't think we really understood the importance of at the time. We had not really looked at the international affairs and disinvestment and any of those questions but we knew very well that these meat bosses were in league with the bosses that our union was fighting against. We were all arrested at that picket and charged with illegal assembly and we got fined for that.

I had a couple of problems when I was Media Officer; I think mainly because I was in that position and I was responsible for everything that was coming off the press. At one stage we, well Oscar Peters trial took place at the Supreme Court in C.T. and we put out a poster about Oscar Mpetser, his life and so on. Basically we were saying in the poster he is not guilty, he is a leader of..he is a trade union community leader, he is highly respected, he is not a criminal. That of course was considered contempt of court, subjudica, as the case was in progress at the time. They did not actually charge us for that which we were very lucky.

The other thing was that a book was put out<sup>by</sup> the Detention Action Committee called the Manual on Detention. Basically advising people how to handle detention, the different sections of the detention laws and so on. I did a..we printed the initial book and I did a reprint of that book and it was subsequently banned for possession. They came and questioned me about it and they were trying to prove in some way that it was linked to the ANC which we had been instructed to write this book, which was complete nonsense. But they actually subpoenaed me because I would not tell them who had given me the copy of the book to print.

I said I was Media Officer; I do the printing here, I have nothing to do with putting things together etc. And they were trying to force me to say who had actually put that book together and how it was distributed and so on. I would not tell them so they subpoenaed me to give evidence before a magistrate. I had a very good lawyer and basically I told them I am a Media Officer, somebody brought this thing to me, I don't know who brought it to me, and I printed it and they collected it. The SRC reception took it away and that is that. They actually could not push me any further in court. They tried to say well, look, you are Media Officer, surely you are responsible, surely you know who brings you things, you can't just do

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A things unquestioningly etc. but they could not prove anything and they couldn't prove that I knew who it was or anything. So they could not take that any further.

The other thing that was interesting was that at the same time as Barbara Hogans trial in Joberg and the Security Police did the most peculiar thing; they tried to prove that she had used this manual soon detention although it was only produced after she had been detained in September; it was produced in November or something like that and they brought out a fake edition of it to try and prove that; eventually the people who had actually produced this book went up to court to testify on Barbara Hogans' side. So it did not matter in the end.

JF Ok, so the reason I was asking you was because you went to P.E. did you have a sense that it was going to be tougher, that things in P.E. that people told you that it is a tough area; that going in as a white you are going to have trouble? Or was it that there were no whites working, there were no whites that had had trouble before?

A Ja, I did have that sense. I mean the one thing was, which happened to me as well, was that the year I was in NUSAS, before I came to P.E., I was stopped coming from a NUSAS conference in Grahamstown to P.E. with two of the other NUSAS officials and we were taken to the SANLAM building in P.E., everything of ours was gone through and so on. We were held for about five hours and I had spoken to Didi Moyle who was a journalist here, who was subject to incredible harassment; her brake cables were cut and her tyres slashed, sugar poured in her petrol tank and all sort of things. I had also heard about Arthur Arnett who is working here who was not really politically involved at all, and who also had the most incredible level of harassment and nobody can really explain why. I think it was just to frighten him off. But we knew that whites here did get harassed. When I came here there was basically Dominic, who was working in DESCOM, Mally was around, and Didi left soon after I got here. So there were very few people to work with at all.

JF And when you got started did you find that it was what you expected with the literacy work, is that pretty straight forward; can you just tell me, I guess I am asking too much detail; tell me why you thought it was important, you spoke a bit about how it is low profile, grass roots, and it is basic and did you feel really assured



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JF and confident about that you were doing some good as white working with blacks?

A Ja, it was very slow getting it started and it still is going very slowly in that sense, but I think because we had worked with the unions in C.T. they were quite willing here to accept us and basically they would go to the workers and say look do you want to join these classes and then we would arrange a venue and start teaching. I also was very lucky because I had some contact with the Youth Congress here and they put forward one of their people to work with me who had been working with me ever since and who is incredible committed, dedicated and being able to work on that project really well; so I was very lucky in terms of getting support for the work that I was doing. Basically we just went round to each organisation and said look, what do you need, do you need anything in terms of educational work, for seminars or shop stewards training or literacy or whatever. And then they would tell us what they need. So I felt that I was, well I still do, that I am pretty much accountable to what the organisations want. And in terms of the project we play a sort of broader resource role in terms of having a library of books and videos and publications for people. We order and sell publications from other centres. We do some administrative training: teaching people how to run organisations, how to raise and a range of skills like that as well. So it is slightly broader than literacy work.

JF What is the name of the organisation?

A Eastern Cape Adult Learning Project.

JF And how would you sum up what you are doing as a white and a black area? I just want to isolate what you think the role of whites could be and what it is for you?

A Well, I think for whites generally that there is a fairly limited role that can and should play in terms of black organisation. It is obviously very important that people develop their own organisational skills and independence. I think the point is that I have got skills, like educational skills etc. which people don't have and which it is incredibly important to share and to develop with other organisations.

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A In terms of trade unions it is not a question because basically workers there desperately need literacy and English skills in terms of their known basic living as well as their organisational needs. So that is quite clear cut.

I think it is a fairly small area; a fairly limited area for whites to work in but it is hell of important here at the moment.

JF Do you see it as a role that noone else is doing so you can do it and you happen to be white, but eventually, ultimately it would be good if a black came in and filled that spot or do you think it just doesn't matter who does it? (Ja)      case it is non racial.

A I don't think it matters at this stage quite honestly. Also just taking it technically, in terms of teaching English as a second language, it is much easier as a white if your first language is English to teach and to train people in English. It is almost impossible to do that if you are Xhosa speaking.

JF Do you speak African languages?

A I speak a bit of Xhosa but not fluent.

JF Did you take a course in university or..?

A Ja, I did a service course which did not help me very much.

JF And then you have talked about that work with blacks literacy project then as soon as you came did you also feel you should get involved with whites, and why? Why don't you figure, ok, you are doing your job, you are doing work, you have your skills, blacks, do they give you feedback to say it is worthwhile? (Ja) Then why do you have to do something with whites?

A I felt because I had moved to P.E. which is an area where the white community is absolutely insular; it tends to be pretty conservative. But is basically cut off from what is going on in the rest of the country and in the black townships of P.E. Then they are literally not interested in...they don't care but they obviously, there must be some people who are concerned somewhere and I felt it was important that we work to bring those people together and to somehow get them in contact with the national movement, with what was going on.



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A And get their support and sympathy and their active work if they were prepared to. And I was very lucky because Gavin Evans, who had been with me at varsity, was here for the first six months that I was here and what we did was the UDF Million Signature Campaign was launched last year. We decided to try and use that as an opportunity to try and reach the white community and see what reaction we got. We were not expecting a mass of sympathy but we thought we would just use it as a testing ground to go out and see what people thought; if they knew what the UDF was, if they would be prepared to sign against apartheid and so on.

The declaration itself was not particularly heavy for people to sign so we got together, initially a very small group, and we had support from some of the church leaders, like Bishop Evans and George Irvine and Molly Blackburn etc. Starting from there we managed to build up a committee of people who were supporters and wanted to be involved in the UDF. It was actually quite surprising because we found people coming out of nowhere. People who had just been interested and concerned and who did not have a place to fit in; who felt they did not have a role and there was no organisation they could get involved with. We provided that space for them to get involved.

JF So that sounds pretty rosy, I mean you went out and whites just were interested. Are you saying that out of the white population there was a small group but more than you expected?

A It is still a small group, but and it is nothing like the type of organisation which is happening in other centres. I mean now in the ECC we have got 30 people involved and we have got about over 100 people who are sympathetic and who support us generally. Which I find very exciting, I didn't actually expect that type of response.

JF So you were prepared to kind of have a hard battle? (Ja) Do you think it is because no one bothers, whites don't bother to try and conscientise people in a place that is allegedly hard conservative as this?

A Well, they don't. They have not been trying to until last year. I mean Molly Blackburn does her level best. She does an incredible amount, more than anybody else up here probably but she is also working in ? level; she is working in parlia...the provincial council and at that sort of official PFP level, and it has limitations.



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JF And did you get a sense that this was of any great interest or concern to the government or the police? What you were doing?

A I don't know. I don't think they really see us as a massive threat. I mean there was harassment because I think they..I don't think the police works uniformly. I think the police in F.E., the Security Police, have a particularly dirty way of working and I think they thought basically that these whities are going to try and cause some shit here and we are going to..we want to harass them and scare them off. We have had numerous incidences of tyre slashing and that sort of thing.

The one thing which was really, really..frightened me a lot and was I had been here about 2months in March, and I went to a meeting on Sharpville in the township, a commemoration meeting on the 21st, with Gavin and a couple of other people and I was driving back and I had..it was just Gavin and an old Dutch woman who I was giving a lift to in the car. And Branch,..we were one of the last groups to leave the meeting and Branch followed us out of the meeting and down the road and overtook our car very fast and a few seconds later a car came back towards us and a rock smashed through my windscreen. While both cars were moving, so it hit the car with incredible force and shattered the windscreen; I was very lucky because it hit..it gladed off the top railing, which meant it did not come right through into my face, but it could quite easily have and I mean I saw that quite clearly as an effort to frighten me off you know. To get out of the townships and stop messing around there.

But the thing is people here are incredibly supportive and I have found that I actually feel incredibly secure here now. I mean we have developed quite a strong community here - supportive people.

JF Hello, did you find your bag.....

I think I want to get into more kind of cruder questions to bring up bigger issues, tend to get bogged down in detail.

Also I do think it helps to be on a personal level, sometimes so I mean didn't..did you think, I had better not go back to the townships.. Did you think I could have been killed, how did you respond on an emotional level?

A I responded by being incredibly paranoid basically for a few months.

I was living alone with Gavin and he was often working night shifts

on the paper, until one or two in the morning and I was literally



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A every time I heard a rustle or knock or something I would get absolutely frozen. I was very scared but in terms of the township itself it didn't..well I think that it probably did have the effect of me thinking definitely if it was worth the risk of going to rallies and that sort of thing. Because I was teaching in the townships in the evenings I couldn't sort of stop going into the townships altogether. And also people there were very supportive and they said look, if you are going to get into shit in the townships, this is blacks that I was working with, you must get an escort. One of us will come with you every time you go somewhere and that sort of thing. So I got a lot of support and it didn't stop me going there. That sort of thing never happened to me again; that type of violence. But often outside my house, I would wake up and two tyres would be flat on the ground.

JF How often?

A I think in that last year I had 9 tyres..9 times.

JF Did you continue to drive alone to the townships?

A Ja, I did but...

JF Would you do that today?

A Well I have been..I have not been going in so much in the past 3 months just because the risk is so much greater at the moment and there is Branch and Riot Police everywhere. Also there is a real risk from people, I mean in the townships themselves. They don't all know me personally and won't help protect me and recently when this AZAPO and UDF clash blew up, I was told <sup>by</sup> my comrades that I must not on any account go into the townships because if AZAPO catch me then I will be finished. And it was as clear as that. And I didn't go in for a while. So, But I have been going in sporadically every now and again.

JF Do you anticipate that as things get more and more polarised that this era of whites being able to go in, that they <sup>may</sup> just end; that you just look back a few years from now to the times when you worked in townships; just there will be too many police, too many clashes, too many so-called UDF AZAPO, who knows what is going on

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JF out there. Do you think about that?

A I don't actually see that. I mean I think you know, I don't think the situation in the townships here is going to go on indefinitely. In the same way that in Sebokent etc. that did not go on indefinitely. I think there is going to be a sporadic periods of this type of violence and resistance in the townships and obviously where it is very intense, one won't be able to but even throughout, ok, you could say here, since November, things have been in a state of complete crisis. There has been sporadic periods of resistance and violence police shootings and that sort of thing. But in that whole period I have been going in and out when things have been slightly quieter and so on.

Obviously I think it will come to a stage where there is pretty much a full scale war going on and then I think one will ... won't be able, only if one is not actually fighting. Won't be able to go in you know.

JF 478 Tape ends.