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JF So can you tell me where were you born?

A In S.A. Joberg. 1959, my name is Gormodzo, now Mrs. Gormodzo  
Nkadimeng.

JF Was your family a political one or did they not go in for politics? Had they been involved in the ANC when it was legal or were they people who said no, we must keep out of trouble; if you get into politics you will get in trouble? How did they teach you?

A My family was never involved in politics. I was the first person at home and naturally my parents were very much against it because of selfish protection if I may say. To them politics was nothing else but being detained, you know sufferings and they were believing that I cannot be involved because I cannot change the system; I found it there and there are so many people anyway who can do it. So they didn't see any need of me as their child, being involved in any politics of some kind.

JF So did you try to argue with them or just quietly do..get involved? Did you ever try to see if you could politidse them?

A Obviously I couldn't operate without arguing with my parents because my political involvment was so..consuming so much of my time that there is no way in which I couldn't explain to my parents why ... what am I doing. And as a result I had to be open with them; argue with them, tell them how independent I was as a...somebody, you know, grown up at that stage. Even if I got involved at the age of 20; but with African people especially at that age, before you are married, whilst you are still schooling to them you are still very much independent. So it was very difficult for me although I argued with them and I mean to a point where my father was feeling that even if I can get arrested there is nothing he can do. Of course it was just an emotional thing which he said at that time. But like because of my involvment, my participation in student politics, and also my involvment in first the executive of COSAS. I got arrested and naturally my father was very much hurt and tried to come and see me in prison but because I was in detention, there was no way in which he could come and see me.

But what I am trying to say is that even if he was, he thought that at some point I would be arrested, and he will have nothing to do

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A with me, but the fact is the conditions are such that there is no way in, which they can isolate me as a family member. And I could see during my arrest how involved and how touchy this thing was; more so I was arrested from home, from my mothers place; they were all there in the morning, about three, and they experienced all the harassment of searching and the arrogance of the police. So in that way I think it is in then that they became...they realised that whether you are involved or you are not, you are still going to be subjected to intimidation, harassment and all that from the police.

JF So was that in '79, with the first COSAS exec.? What motivated you to get involved? That must have been, you were quite young? You were what, what standard were you? Or form or what ever?

A In 1976 when I really got involved <sup>because</sup> I was probably attracted by the mobs psychology of demonstrations, around that time. I was very young then but because I was schooling and all schools, all students were demonstrating; there was no way in which I couldn't. But I mean in <sup>the</sup> process of demonstrations, we met people from the SSRC, and these people kept talking to us saying you got...that is how I got interested in politics. Probably because I was very talkative also and I remember in one of the demonstrations when we were marching to John Vorster Square for the list of all people who were detained, that time, I had my funny beliefs of then I was not a political person; I was a mere student demonstrating with other students and I thought that the whites in S.A. are the enemy and as a result, why I..what I said to that person whom I didn't know then that he was a student leader, who was one of the SSRC chaps; I said why don't we give our parents <sup>who</sup> are working in all these domestic workers, some poison to kill all the whites. Laughs. And apparently how this chap got interested in me to say, but I mean this one can be trained properly. And that is how he told..how he explained his whole case long after that we are already involved in the ANC activities.

JF So, how did he start to train you properly? Did he say to you look, we are not fighting against the whites or did he just say to you stupid idea or....



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A person. Because he said to me but not all whites are enemy, you know. And that ? we are correcting to do because we have democratic whites. But I didn't understand; then it took me years and I think two, three years not understanding why his statement, you know. Because unfortunately I didn't meet that person continually; I met him that day and then I met him for sure after a month and that is how he then tried to explain the policies of the ANC to me and he trained me politically.

JF So this I think is what I am trying to get at. It is very clear and obvious why you would grow up in Soweto and an intelligent person would see and immediately want to be anti white, but how you could move from feeling that way over two or three years. To say well,... ? Could you say something about that? Were there any other things that influenced you? Were there any whites, or was it just that it didnt make sense not to be black, white, or what ?

A As I say, this comrade in particular was very clear and there was no white involved in the explanation of things, of the political situation at home. ~~By~~ the type of training I got from inside, from this comrade, was so clear that to me, I immediately understood that not everybody is an enemy, especially when you explain to me there's different social systems, you know, when you came to capitalism in particular, to tell me that two opposed classes, the working class and the bourgeois class, and in our case unfortunately apartheid is put... is pushed forth, you know, it's.....sort of a scapegoat, of capitalism, when in reality it is not the case, because I mean, whites are being given privelges to divide the working class itself, and as a result weaken it, you know, and that alone made me,..convinced me that by the way you are all living in South Africa, and if we say we are going to drive them to the sea, I mean why should we do that because South Africa is what it is today because of this type of.... all of us, you know, our joint effort.

JF Now the other thing that you said that is really important, is the S.A. Government tries to put out that people are too scared to discuss the ANC and at the same time they say there are ANC terrorists everywhere. The idea that you could just matter of factly say that somebody would explain it, ANC policy to you, I mean are young people in S.A. today, was it your experience that people supported the ANC, that they were learning about the ANC, that people were talking about the ANC, and that is just one of the



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AF things that just never come out. Just as well because they do say COSAS is an ANC front, whereas the reality is people inside feel that way. (ja, ja) But can you talk about that?

JF You know I think from 1979, people are very free inside the country to talk about the ANC. Probably it is because the impact, the education, the understanding of the S.A. situation, in relation to the policies of the ANC; there is no way in which these people can...not support the movement. The situation demands...the situation is such that there is no way in which one can say, I mean those who of course, those who support the ANC, can say that the policies of the movement are not relevant at this point.

And just like I said earlier that I was arrested because I was on the National Executive of COSAS. It was believed that COSAS was a front of the ANC which was not true.

COSAS is a student movement and happened to be having very clear political directives. Even if it is student politics, but it is student politics aspiring a new democratic S.A. and it so happened that its constitution, its beliefs, its aspirations are that of the ANC. And because as we know that earlier on, during the 50s when the movement was still legal people knew the movement so much and it had organised so much, during the , when they were organising region by region, streets by streets and as a result it never just faded away. Even during the lull in the movement; after that Rivonia trial. 60s, beginning of the 70s, the movement was relatively not very active.

But as the students reorganised themselves, of course, with the basis of their consciousness, which was not relevant at that time the movement...the people came to realise that there is no way in which people can not link the struggle, not link the progressive democratic organisations, like the ANC. You know it is the liberation movement today. And that is why people justify it...I can, simply say people have unbanned the ANC inside the country you know and it is from them, it is not that...the ANC is the people in my understanding. Because they believe in what the ANC is doing and actually they are instructing the ANC to do that and ANC is them. In different departments because they are banned right now. But as we see in the current issues..are..it is clear that people have decided that whatever happens anyway, we are still going to struggle. And banning the ANC is all well..officially rubbing it..I don't know what, how they come to a conclusion of banning an organisation but you cannot say you have managed to suppress the feeling of a



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A suffering people.

JF Let me ask you was that a .... (time, because I see some of the people are already waiting) so was that a...(no I ha...) Was that something you thought about when you were in COSAS, not to appear to be linked to the ANC?

A You know COSAS was formed under very difficult conditions. First it was after two or three, two years of the system having banned all organisations; schools not operating very properly but under all those difficult conditions, COSAS was formed. And fortunately coincided with the 100th Century of the Isandlwane; the battle of Mzilikazi and the British and The only battle, well amongst the only battle that was won by the Africans.

The campaign came that it was the year of Isandlawane and COSAS took it up and it was...so much well organised throughout, and advertised so as that the enemy immediately felt that this is ANC, in students heads. And the students themselves felt that with the activities armed activities, of the ANC, you know immediately after the 1976, uprisings, that there is no other alternative to this apartheid government, Botha, Malan, you know, regime. But the ANC.

And because you know the oppresses, the oppressive laws it is difficult in S.A. to stand up and say that. Although COSAS defined as you say clearly, and lifted the flag of the ANC and went around distributing pins of Isandlwane. Well, I can't say it was our idea, I didn't know where they came from, but all what I know is that they had a flag of the movement and they were very much warned by everybody, throughout the country, everybody seemed to be excited by the fact that the movement is coming up very strong and the students are broadly coming up and saying ANC.

And from 79 everybody has seen that the ANC has come very clearly and irrespective of the harassment that the people are experiencing people continue to say the ANC, as you say, they bury their people in our flag; they talk about the ANC; they are no longer afraid.

JF And when were you detained? Around..was it surely..I don't care about dates but I mean you were detained shortly after the formation or when they did the whole sloop or what?

A I was not detained, because COSAS was formed on the 4th June and we were detained on the 23rd November. The whole executive through-



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A throughout the country...it was national executive.

JF '79.

A Ja, 1979. Throughout the country; I must say because Iphraim was our President, then was in the Northern Transvaal. We were in Joburg, and other were in the Cape; ? Sansila was in the Cape. Op ? Masukwani was in Pretoria; ? you know, and it is because of, as I say, those few months of sort of advertising the policies, the constitution of COSAS, which then the enemy said it is an ANC front. Probably because of its progressive-ness as a student organisation. And probably because of course, as a mistake, done by COSAS then, it was not organising students from the school, because it was difficult to address the students. As a result we were organising from outside the classrooms and almost getting everybody, even non scholars you know; unemployed youth, working youth, all, almost everybody you know. Around '79 all...almost all activities were organised by COSAS and I mean this was really pressurising the enemy to a point that they felt if they can leave us to go for another year, to see an annual conference, because we were then to have another conference, around May, probably that is how they felt they have to detain us. The armed activities of the movement, sabotage to the enemys' economic targets was intensifying and this was very much supported by the people. So I think this is what lead to our detention.

JF And then...

End of tape.

Side B

A We were in detention for 12 and half months, because we were released around May/June, I am not sure. Just...

JF Just released, not charged, nothing...?

A No, it was detention without trial...a pure detention. No they did not have anything against us and it was difficult for them to take us to court. Also I think why it was relatively short irrespective of the allegations they had, that we were into the ANC. I think COSAS was becoming a...world known type of student organisation, that was formed under those conditions which was creating a lot of attraction; it was coming up and we were saying ANC for the first time and there was just too much pressure from the outside.



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A I think they had no option but to release us.

JF And did that detention really affect you? Did it really scare you? Was it the first time you had been picked up?

A It was the first time I was picked up; I was never scared and that is why I continued struggling even after my detention to a point that unfortunately I couldn't stay longer in the country after my detention because I was now closely watched by the enemy and I couldn't do anything effective, whether above board or underground so I had to leave the country.

JF So you left shortly after the detention?

A No, I left two months after the release from detention.

JF And was it obvious that you would go right to the ANC? I mean did you...

A It was very obvious, I mean I had no option; I had no qualms, I had no questions- I just said to myself there is no other organisation, there is no organisation for me, to carry on my student politics and I had widened my scope there and I was now thinking more of a nation... on a national basis than just on a small sector of youth and students. As a result the only organisation which could prove to me that they can accommodate my beliefs then, was the ANC. I automatically just came out and joined the ANC.

JF Was it a difficult thing to leave the country? Was it scary or just saying goodbye to your parents? Were you able to even tell them you were leaving?

A No I was not able to tell them - I just left, like I am just going to town and coming back and it was very difficult to leave the country. It was under difficult conditions; I mean it is not a legal thing, it is illegal and you have to have so many contacts to leave the country which is not a very easy thing because people are scared. They do not know who is working for the enemy, who is doing to identify the spooks and the people and it is just a difficult thing.

JF When you came out then <sup>would</sup> you say you were completely non racial or



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JF are you still evolving that? I mean would you have still been suspicious of every white, or did you find that the ANC had white people and did that surprise you? Could you tell me a bit about that?

A Ever since my involvement in COSAS, for me since its inception, for me its constitution which was drawn in my presence, as a person who fully participated in its formation anyway, I never had problems <sup>with</sup> whites because we were a non racial organisation. From the onset, so that was a real small problem for me solve.

JF Those two years, it was in '76 that that guy first said to you, no we are not against...(Ja)...

A It was long..COSAS was formed years after that and ....

JF And when you were in S.A. did you have any experiences..just I..if you could just talk a bit about it, maybe non racialism doesn't mean you have to have any contact with whites. Maybe it just..maybe it is silly of me to dwell on it. Maybe it just means you accept any one finished. But I am just wondering, in practice, what that meant. If you had...

A In practice, to be objective, we shouldn't be very subjective; since whites are not very much involved at home, even if they are we are not staying with them; we don't know what they do, we don't know who they are; we don't know where they come from and it is very difficult to know exactly why this person had just started/decided to join the movement. And naturally one would be suspicious, even if I am the ANC. It is unlike when I meet somebody African whom I can be able to say, who was my neighbour or something somebody else know and I can easily able to tell/identify and trace his history back. And as we say because we are developed by that system it is not a thing which is just immediately going to be eradicated from our minds.

But, being suspicious, you can be suspicious to black or white but as I say it is more on the white side than black but it doesn't mean that the enemy is always white. We always...I mean we also have black people who are enemy. But this problem of getting rid of apartheid beliefs in you, also as a person, as an individual is not an easy thing.



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JF Can you remember when you first heard of Mandela and the ANC? Can you even remember?

A It is around 1976, ja.

JF So it was not before that that you had heard?

A No, I was very hindered to know anything about that. I mean the name it is long in me but it did not mean anything to me. I only meant something after 76, after I was involved, after I was trained politically and my awareness. Also I was sort of developing further.

JF Can you remember when you first heard of like Bram Fisher or Joe Slovo?

A Aah, it is around that time also - all these names started to mean something to me in essence around the time when I was involved ...

JF But I am just wondering that...did you have any reaction, do you ever remember someone saying, look there are people who died, or those people who were involved in MK? I mean was..that that would have been a surprise to you or anything? Just wondering if you remember when people were speaking about it? Because now in S.A. if you go to meetings people are shouting Slovo, all the time, but obviously they are shouting Tambo, Mandela more but they do even say Slovo, because he is on the...involved with MK. And I am just wondering if you remember having or thinking there is a white man involved?

A As I say I don't remember having problems because I immediately was in the hands of the ANC, from my very first time when I was involved. So immediately, because I was prepared to learn, I was interested in politics and fortunately I fell into the right hands from the onset. So really I did not have problems.

I was actually asking myself that but you know what kind of words are these. Didn't they...weren't they getting the same sort of opportunities, that every other white is getting. It was surprising to me. To me it was something out of the ordinary which, you know in the (contr ? ) was...sort of encouraging me to say...I mean if people who are not suffering, because then I believed they were not suffering, I didn't have much politics to know that we are all suffering, it is just a few people who are not, can be involved so why can't I.



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JF Do you...can you just tell me about Botswana and the recent event in Botswana?

A I must say it....it is a very difficult thing but anyway, since I was in the movement, and I was, it was decided that I work from Botswana, like our other comrades I got married, to a comrade whom I met two years back, but anyway we married, two years after on the 14th December, only to be a widow on the 14th of May because he was petrol bombed. My husband's name was Rogers <sup>Vernon</sup> Wenan Kadima. Kadi means son/sun. And he was petrol bombed; I mean he was bombed, car bombed, in Gabarone and we think because we were always using the car, both of us. It was directed to both of us but unfortunately I ~~delayed~~ and it only affected him. Well, as he usually does, every morning he used to start the car first, warm it and then I come. So that is how it happened that day. Well we had an appointment to see somebody at about 9.30, at 20 to 10 we decided it was too late for him to wait, he can rather go, rush and I follow him and unfortunately a few minutes after I heard this explosion. Well I jumped, like any other person but I didn't associate it with me and I heard people screaming and I peeped, then I saw that the roof of the flats, blown up with smoke, but I went inside the house again. Because I didn't associate it with me at all. So the second time somebody rushed into the house and said to me it is your husband and so I jumped out, and as I approached the car it was...in very many pieces, there was no body, there was nothing they could find, there was no head. But I couldn't see anything because apparently I just collapsed before I could reach that piece of flesh which I saw on the main road. But otherwise after that I was taken to hospital and when we buried him there was really nothing, nothing, like I mean I can't describe what I saw. There was nothing; I can't say I saw this part of the body.

JF And what went through your mind as to who did/was responsible?

A Obviously I knew it was the SA enemy hit squads who has done that. Nobody else would do it. I mean I can't just imagine any other person doing that. We are in the struggle and we knew what can happen at any time. We committed ourselves, this is what we mean by sacrifice. That is just what I immediately thought could have happened to my husband.



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JF personal level to that, does your politics help you deal with it? I mean have you...are there things that you think about that help you deal with that, that have to do with your commitment? Just to deal with the grief, with understanding what has happened?

A I suppose, jam it is not a very simple thing to understand. Even if one is political, one also has feelings and it goes a very long way to prove your commitment, your deep understanding to what you are saying, because without this type of commitment, one can never accept seeing pieces of a person thrown all over.

JF And the attack on Botswana a month later?

A Ja, well that is what I heard. I was gone out of Botswana then and unfortunately they raided and again they hit some of our rooms where we were sleeping. We were not sleeping in the same place where we were staying because we knew they can..any time..can happen anytime. And unfortunately they hit..that is where they hit two Botswana girls, in those back rooms and 14 other people. I mean 12 others, 6 of whom were our comrades, and 6 are different people. Somadi, there, Botswana, Basoto and some children, two children.

JF So just the final thing, are you saying that that experience, would that experience make you bitter? Anti anyone or..what has it done to you do you think?

A Actually I must say that this experience has hardened me; it has made me more angry, it has actually made me double my efforts and my involvement and as a result I <sup>strongly</sup> feel that whatever I do I will be doing it for both of us. For as long as we haven't.... liberated our country, I think the only way for me to do now is to double my efforts.

I know that you wouldn't have liked me to be disillusioned, to bring the movement to be disgruntled; he would be very disappointed if I could do that and I think the only way, since he died, when I had loved him very much; the only way that I can prove my love to him is to be as involved as I can. That is why even if..even now I am here irrespective of the fact that it is only 2 months after his death and I have never said I am mourning. I want to believe that my mourning will be, you know realise recognise and appreciated by revolutionaries, by my double efforts and showing that, by the way



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A I know that it could happen, it can happen to me or anybody progressive in this world.

And we cannot...I mean...whether I mourn now or I mourn tomorrow the fact is I am not going to stop mourning until we take over that country.

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