

N: in Ciskei. I used to go as far as King Williams-town to attend meetings.

JF: And were you impressed with the black consciousness that you saw?

N: Yes, I was much impressed.

JF: And what was impressive about it? Why did it attract you? Were they saying at those meetings that the whites were the problem?

N: No. No, they didn't actually say that whites were the problem. We -

So, I used to get people who were more enlightened and people who were educated and I was still very young and a bit tiny, so they were interested in me because I used to ask them questions if I've heard something or if I'd read something. I used to ask those people.

And you know this guy Donald Woods was one of the men who used to impress me. And the way that he escaped South Africa. He was an intelligent guy and why does he go away. He was a friend of Steve's and other things. They said no, not all the whites are bad people.

JF: Did you end up getting very involved in BC?

N: No, I didn't involve myself because I was in school. I was just involved in these small organisations in the schools.

JF: But did you support it much? Did you get that involved much in thinking that you supported it quite strongly?

N: Ya I supported it quite strongly. But I don't remember any prominent organisation at that time except for the BPC.

JF: You left Cape Town and you went where?

N: I went to the Ciskei in Sada, a township. It's near Queenstown.

JF: And why did you go there?

N: It was a day school. First I went to Craddock. In Craddock I had the problem of the water. It was too salty, so I had to go and look for another place. I went to King Williamstown and I didn't like King Williamstown, the same year 1977. SO I went to stay with relatives.

So when I went to Queenstown the schools were a bit chaotic. So my mother's sister stayed in Sada so I went there. It's the place of my father.

JF: So you were sent there to go to school basically.

N: Yes.

JF: And did you like it there? Was it different from the Transkei?

N: Ja. I liked it there. It was more free than the Transkei.

JF: And did you get involved or interested in anything then?

N: In 1977 after all that I found myself involved with sports more than anything else. And the other thing that affected me that was the death of my father.

Until September with the death of Steve Biko which made me go back again to politics.

JF: In what way, how did you get into politics. What did you do?

N: The way that Steve died it hurt me very bad. It affected me very, very, very bad. And I used to read and when I read in the papers I thought they're doing the same things now.

If the good people are dying who's going to teach us? That was the direction, because I saw that we have problems. They have problems in education, they have problems in community. They have problems as blacks.

So I was just a rebel even at school. Just uncontrollable. If there's a meeting if there's a commemoration service I used to attend those things, but not that I'm involved in an organisation.

But hearing that such an organisation would be doing this, reading the pamphlet, if someone has told me then I needed to hear. I used to go to those meetings. I was just not stable. I used to attend, then the UDF meeting after attending Azapo.

If today there's a UDF meeting, I'll attend that meeting, if there's an Azapo meeting the next day I'd attend that meeting, not differentiating exactly. Because I didn't think there was any difference in those organisations.

Ncont: I'd take these organisations all the same. They are fighting the white man only.

JF: Is that how you feel now?

N: No, not now.

JF: But how you felt then?

N: Ja.

JF: So it was fighting the white man despite what Rev(?) had said to you? After Steve was killed were you anti-white, were you mad at the whites?

N: No, I was not exactly anti-white I was just anti-police. Seeing the SAP uniforms, the soldier even if he's black or white, I was just hating the police.

JF: Who was it Lungile Thabalaza, he was killed after Steve?

N: Yes.

JF: So that death of Steve or anyone else didn't make you anti-white? Was that finished that anti-white phase?

N: Ja it was finished but I was just anti-police now. But all the people began to hate the Government and Kruger, they began to say he was the cause of the programme. All those people who were bullies like Botha and Louis Le Grange today.

JF: So then you went to meetings but you didn't align yourself with any of them?

N: No, I didn't align myself with any of them.

JF: And how long were you in Sada?

N: I was there from '77, '78, '79 and 1980 I went to Alice.

JF: Also schooling?

N: Ja.

JF: How long did you stay in Alice?

N: I stayed there for two years.

JF: So, what kind of things had you done in Sada and Alice? Was there anything important?

N: I would say the most important thing in Alice - in 1980 there were riots in the Ciskei in particular.

JF: What were they about the riots?

N: They were about the kind of education we were getting. About the foods and in our school it started like a sympathy strike.

And at that time we didn't get the right directions. We used to fight the teachers. Because I remember at school we stoned the teacher and at a secondary school a principle was stabbed to death, by kids.

This was organised because we used to have meetings each and every night to discuss things, the problems they were having the riots at other schools.

And the riots that were happening in Sada. I used to take a bus and go there late in the evening.

Ncont: One morning I was just harassed by the police and they said you are not good and you are not supposed to be here, at the school here, so just go back to the school where you are studying.

So I went back to Alice. And on another day some boys came to where I stay and said we are having a meeting in such and such a place and we need you to come. So we went to this meeting. It was twelve noon.

So we discussed everything. Our principle is a sell-out. We didn't think seriously like I think now. So the next day we wouldn't take books to school and we didn't attend assembly.

But there were no good reasons that we could put for our boycott of classes. So on this day we went to school and the bell rings.

And there was a certain teacher teaching us geography and we used to like that teacher, he was from Nigeria. So the problem of that, what are we going to do with him, because we mustn't do any thing.

So the bell rings and we were telling our principle there, Our headboy, this and this and this. And when he rang the bell we just stoned him. You are a sell-out.

And some of the younger kids they didn't know what was happening and they were scared, because it's a rural place and we started to stone the windows of the school, the principles office and the car. And we ran away and started stoning the shops, the offices the clinics.

Ncont: Until such time as the soldiers were called then we ran away. And then we didn't attend any classes. There was a guy in our area who was sort of a community leader. So there was a parent's meeting and I believe in that meeting all the kids that were causing trouble were the kids from the Cape and the Transvaal and so these kids need to be arrested and they need to be expelled, from the Ciskei.

Then I was doing standard ten. I went to my other sister in King Williamstown, I went in the evening running away, because I didn't want to be arrested. Because I know how people are being treated.

There's a place called Nqonqo, which is a place in the Ciskei, a jail. And people were beaten to death there. So, in King Williamstown there is a township there Walesha where Sam used to stay.

In the morning when I woke up these green berets, similar to Inkata, but they don't have these weapons, they used to have sjamboks and they used to beat us. So they were raiding all the houses taking all the kids back to school and even if you weren't studying they'd say all the schools are the same just go and study.

So I went to Sonse, some civil servants flats, and my cousin's brother stayed there, so I went there. And then I saw that the police were coming to raid these flats. I went back to Alice.

So, I stayed there and we were called that we must return to classes. The boycott is over and so forth and so forth. And I didn't want to attend any classes and hearing the rumours that there would be independence in the Ciskei, having friends in Fort Hare, telling us of many things.

Ncont: There was an old man who was an ex Robben Island prisoner and he takes back my memory to what was happening in those days and he used to compare the life of the time that they were living and our time.

JF?: Who was that?

N: I don't remember his name now. But he's a very old man in Alice.

So, the attitude of the people in the Ciskei said we are the ones who are causing these riots and said their kids are not the ones causing the riots, and their kids were not arrested and we were not so we are the ones causing all this trouble.

So just before I was supposed to go home, some police, the SBs now came to this house and I was arrested. This was in 1980.

So I stayed there for about two weeks and after that I returned home, to Cape Town.

JF: Does that mean you were detained for two weeks? Did they interrogate you?

N: They were police I knew from Sada so there was not much that was done to me, except that my hair was cut, we used to be ill treated, beaten and they cut our hair. Apart from that the only people who were beaten were boys.

I remember the kids who stabbed the principle, they were taken like slaves and put in prison. They were sent to Fort Beaufort. Because Alice was full. The jails were full there. They were beaten.

So, all the girls were just released after that two weeks.



Ncont: The problem with the boys is that they were beaten very very badly.

JF: So was that it? Were none of you allowed back to school?

N: No, none of us were allowed back to school. we presumed most of the kids couldn't attend classes since we'd been detained. And we thought how can we attend classes when our schoolmates are detained.

And my mother phoned and said I was to come back, she didn't want me to end up in jail.

JF: So what school were you at then?

N: It was Amabella High School, in the Ciskei.

JF: And what year were you doing then?

N: I was doing standard ten.

JF: So you went back to Gugulethu?

N: I went back to Gugulethu.

JF: And what month was this?

N: It was in May. So in Capetown when I arrived there was a bus boycott. And someone asked me how I was going to get where I was going. I said I would take a train to Nyanga then from there I would take a bus. He said No, Azikwela, which means there's a bus boycott, you must boycott the buses. So we were discussing this and I didn't know who I was talking to, and he was an old man. He asked why are you back and I said we were boycotting school and we did this and this and this.

Ncont: So he said OK fine I'll show you where you can go. I said, No, I was born in Capetown I'll know where to go, what platform I'll get the train!

He said no I'll have to escort you. So I said for what good reason, he said you'll be suspicious and he was police. So he said you've come all the way from the Ciskei and you're going to corrupt these kids too.

And I was arrested. My mother received a phone call telling her I was in jail, because we'd done many things on the way - stoning police on the trains because we were a crowd. Most of the guys were from Worcester, which is just before Cape Town.

So we were arrested in Cape Town. And it was just for a Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Monday we were released.

JF: And then what?

N: I went back home. And there was a street boycott in Cape Town and that's when I started being involved with the trade unions, in 1980.

On that day that I was released, my mother and my uncle they came to fetch me. After that I just went home to wash myself and then I went to the General Workers' Union office to take some pamphlets distributing them to butchers and the community.

JF: How did you know to go to the General Workers' Union?

N: My uncle worked for the GWU.

JF: Rev? So Rev took you there?

N: Ja he took me there. He said Baby you have to help me. We have a typewriter there so I used to type some letters for the Union and asked some questions about the Union.

And I became more enlightened when there was this meat boycott. And the bus boycott. But I was more involved in the meat boycott.

So, we were distributing pamphlets with Rev. and we were coming from Athlone just via the police station. And I started to throw them in the police station so the police were chasing us. I didn't know what was wrong what was right.

I used to challenge the police. So they chased us and they get us when we were turning off at 108, and they stopped the car and we were both arrested. So my uncle was in detention for 90 days - I think there was that 90 day detention so he was there for that time.

And I was just in and out because there were many things that were doing and I was involved in those things. Stoning busses, attending meetings, and after those meetings we would stone the houses of those we think are SBs and I was just arrested now and then.

Just before the school, we were called that we must come back to school. And before that I was arrested again. And we stayed for quite a number of days and the schools were open and the kids hear at school that I was arrested in Cape Town so they went on strike again demanding that the principle must phone Cape Town and tell the police to release me. It was just foolishness.

Ncont: So I was released and I stayed at home for a week. I wrote to them and I said no I'm out and I'll be coming to school so there were these busses which used to take us to school now, we were no longer using trains.

Then in Alice I heard the rumour again that there's school boycotts again. I was afraid because I know that I was not well situated there because it was a rural area and I feared the news that there were people saying you are the ones who are causing this.

But I went to school and the next day the boycott started. And we stayed and stayed for a couple of about a month and then after that I went to PE. I stayed in PE. I attended meetings there but there were some boycotts again there.

And we returned in September. And we were told that we were supposed to write exams. Even in 1980 I was not enlightened about the whole situation. About what was happening.

Because we wrote the exams under police guard. In 1980. Started to write in the end of October and a number of kids were not present but we wrote.

JF: And did you pass?

N: Ja, I passed.

JF: And then what happened after that?

N: I went to Fort Hare in 1981.

JF: You matriculated and went to Fort Hare?

N: Ya I went to Fort Hare after my matric.

N: The same thing happened because we had a number of riots and my mother said no, because now and then we have to go back home, and she said that's enough because I had younger sisters who were supposed to go to school and now we are just wasting money.

So I must just decide what to do. So in 1981 it was just up and down and up and down and early '82 I returned and there were boycotts. So after that I came down from Alice. My mother's sister was in Howick. She wrote to me explaining my mother's story.

I was a bit chaotic, because I wanted to skip seeing that most of the kids are just running away from South Africa and I didn't know what they were running away from. So I approached my mother, 'some of the kids are going away and how to go away'.

JF: From South Africa?

N: Ja.

JF: You didn't know where they were going?

N: No. But they used to come to me. 'Walele, don't you want to leave with us? We are going to lead a better life, we are going to get a better education'. My mother said 'No, if you want to go away, you want to skip then you must know that I'll be dead. You'll kill me, I'll die of heart disease. Because if you went away from South Africa, you won't come back. The moment you come back you'll be killed.'

And now I had a problem. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, thinking of this. I suffered from depression because they, the days were just numbered.

Ncont: They used to come and say 'Are you ready?' I'd say no, I'm still pleading with my mother. 'Why did you tell your mother? You're not supposed to tell your mother. What happen if she goes to the police and reports? Did you tell any of the names?' 'No, I didn't mention any names.' 'But we know your mother she would never do this. But try to talk with her because she is the only person who must know you are going away from South Africa.'

So my mother wrote a letter to my auntie. She told her everything, how I behave and so forth and my aunt sent me money and said I must come down to her for some time. And I went to Howick. And she was staying in Zenzel just near Howick. So I stayed there for about two months.

Though Rev came down to us. And I came down to Durban too, because I was just there in Howick. So when he came to down and he said he'd take me to Claremont. He told Diliza everything about me, so one day they convinced me -

JD: Is this the old Diliza or the young one?

N: No, the young one. So I stayed with them in 1982. And I have a programme of heart disease at that time and headache - I was once involved in a car accident at that time, and we didn't go to the doctor for a checkup.

So when I went to the doctor and said it's neurosis and I had that problem. I was sick and I involved myself in many things. So I was in a very bad state in 1982. And I had treatment and advices from Diliza and other people.

Ncont: So, in May in 1982 I had a job. I'd been approached by Mike Norris working for General Workers' Union in Cape Town and he was working that time. And so they came to see what I could do. And they said there's a vacancy in Fasadu. In 1982, I still had that anti-white attitude.

I still had that. And from what I was told, In Alice I was helping Sau. In Cape Town I was helping General Workers' Union.

So these Sau people here wanted to give me a job but I said no, I have to get back home. I didn't come to Durban to work or to do anything, I just came to my aunt.

I partly helped Sau and General Workers' Union. Then I heard there was conflict between SAU and GWU. And when I went to ask those SAU people why are you fighting with the GWU, because I didn't have any knowledge or foresight in 1982.

So they told me no those whites there they are not helping the blacks. They are helping the employers getting information for them, telling the wrong things and when I was approached by Forsythe, Jack Shiner phoned and said there's a place here, a job. They wanted to see me. And I asked Diluzi about it, but he said no I won't go to that union if there are whites there. How can we work with them.

So I said no, I'll just go to Forsythe to see. You mustn't get this from other people. I said but I think Sau is the best Union fighting for blacks in South Africa.

And from the experience that I have in the Ciskei, I know these SAU people are all arrested. They were in a meeting in East London ...

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Ncont: So I saw that if they are all arrested then it's the best organisation. So from getting different views from different people, like the late Peggy Dlamini, she was working for fruit and canning, she used to convince me too - ja just to there. I don't think there's anything wrong with that union, you have to go there and see.

If we all work for progressive organisations who are the people who are going to change the organisations are the people who are working together with their employers. So from then I said no, I have to go there and see.

Then I started to work with Fasadu. I had some problems starting with Fosadu(?) because I used to go here and there which Fasadu was against.

JF: What do you mean here and there?

N: I mean attending these gatherings, like we went to the meeting, I think it was early 1983 or late 1982, in Sobantu Pietermaritzburg, where there were boycotts and a certain schoolkid was shot.

So there was a banning order on the meeting - no freedom songs, no T-shirts with slogans. And when we went to that meeting I used to have connections with these Cosas guys and we went to the meeting with these guys and the SAU people. So when we went to that meeting we broke that banning order.

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Ncont: We were singing the freedom song, asking them if they were afraid of the whites, so if they were not afraid they must not kill us or restrict us or tell us what to do. We must bury the youth the way we wanted to bury the youth.

I was in a state of confusion. I didn't know what direction I had to take. When something happened or a kid has been killed I used to hate everything, I used to hate each and every white.

I was just taken back to the same attitude that I used to have. I had that problem 1982.

Then in 1983 I tried to be more and more politicised and to belong to a non-racial organisation. In late 1983 or early 1984, by getting people who could explain to me or to see people how they involve themselves.

And though I was just unstable. Because with the death of Neil Aggett too, I began to see well, this death in detention is starting again. And if this Neil Aggett died then he died for the blacks, because most of the trade unions, the whites who are involved are fighting mainly for the blacks, because not many whites are in the trade unions.

From my knowledge, Fosadu I thought that it was mainly for whites. Take for instance Taska, I thought that only whites had the right to join the unions, that blacks didn't. So I took Fosadu as the same organisation.

During this death of Neil Aggett, I started to change. And asked what is a trade union and what is it fighting for?

Ncont: So, that was the time that I became more enlightened about the organisations. About the political ones, the trade unions, and the others. That's when I got the knowledge of differentiation.

And with the arrival of the UDF and the Azapo. I was able to differentiate the black consciousness organisations and the non-racial organisations.

JF: So how did you actually move to accept non-racialism? With all the things you said before how did you overcome the suspicion of whites? What did you learn that made you accept non-racialism? What do you believe now?

N: The first thing that spurred me to be more interested in the non-racial organisations - the death of Neil Aggett. Now in 1982 I didn't hear about that - so from reading and meeting people who knew him.

People like Jan Theron. I met him at the funeral of the late Peggy Dlamini. So most of the things came to me that way.

And Forsythe at Fosadu. And learning that there were whites and blacks in Fruit and Canning and other trade unions. And learning how Neil Aggett was helping, sacrificing in the union.

JF: And what did Rev think? Did he think you should join the Forsyther union?

N: I also phoned Rev and he said No babe there's nothing wrong with Fosadu. It's just like here in Cape Town we are having whites. General Workers' Union is another trade union.

And the experience now from my friend in the offices. Even here I used to have fights with other white officials here.

Ncont: Because I started to work with complaints taking the complaints from the workers, doing the administration, but basically I was working on the complaints side. Because I was more concerned with people coming to the offices having problems of dismissals, having problems with pensions, more especially with disputes in the companies.

And that was the time that I was much involved with Mau, having campaigns campaigning at Dunlop campaigning at Samcol and seeing the attitude of these employers to the other whites that we were working with.

Then I saw that these whites with whom we are working, they've got the same problems that we are having because in the community we have the Special Branch - these people are siding with the Government. And most of the people we are working with they are on our side. So we would have to accept that. So then I came to realise there's nothing wrong with the whites. Because we've also got people who are special branch and sell-outs.

And from the work of the Black Sash, because when - my mother used to tell me about Black Sash too, but I was never involved because I didn't want to hear anything about that.

JF: Why?

N: 'What are they doing for us? There is no white who can do anything for us.' But during this time of the riots in 1976, I heard much about them that they were helping those families whose kids were detained. Their kids were shot.

Ncont: And with Crossroads, they were helping. That helped me to know not all the whites are bad. That was the time they were trying to move Crossroads. And Rev. Russell went to Crossroads and with the Black Sash ladies they all went there on that night just to stop that, because I think they said they were going to Opondoza houses. And with a deportation and how the Black Sash helped.

So I saw that really hating those people and having been harrassed by blacks the SBs, so it means that it's fifty-fifty, so I must just look to the bad people not look to them by the colour of their skin. If I were to do that I would be misleading myself and I won't be helping.

JF: When you came to have that non-racial point of view, did you not support BC at all anymore? Did you ever go to an Azapo meeting?

N: No.

JF: Why not?

N: Seeing Azapo being so black consciousness, I thought really those people were not doing the right thing.

And from reading, from the history of Zimbabwe, and I think in 1981, '86, when Mugabe got in power. We went to Fort Hare when the elections were over. Then we shared the history of Robert Mugabe with the students of Fort Hare and getting all this.

And most of the people were asking since Zimbabwe is different now, what is going to happen there? Are they going to say that all the whites must go - the people who used to tell us said No, you must not hate the whites they are going to places and -

JF: What places where are you talking about?

N: Having representation in the parliament. If there is a bad law that is going to be introduced, then these people are on our side. If they are going to do this for the blacks then we must think of them. These people still have a place for you in their hearts, no matter what the black people are doing.

But we've got some representation there. So, and reading of what Van Zyl Slabbert or Helen Suzman are doing, how they fight for blacks there in parliament which shows that they are not pretending.

And reading from history, because I was a history student.

JF: So, do you think the PFP is O.K.?

N: Ja. I think it's OK. Because each and every organisation is having its problems.

JF: And when you are looking at Mugabe, you are saying Mugabe has let the whites stay?

N: So, I regarded Mugabe as one of these intelligent people; he was non-racial.

JF: And this whole non-racialism, did it have any understanding of economics? Were you thinking at all about socialism or any of those things?

N: On the economic side, I think it didn't play such a role with socialism or anything because I was never introduced to the stage of socialism or economy.

Only- I was never involved with that. Because I started working with the Trade Unions, I didn't concentrate so much on the business of wages or anything.

Ncont: I was only concentrating on - where a dismissed worker might get a job. Because jobs were becoming more scarce. If someone is from the Transkei, there's no jobs there nor in the Ciskei, and the money is very little.

Anyone working in the urban areas was getting more money. So, I believed that Trade Unions were the only organisations that were going to protect the workers. Not thinking anything about the wages. The unions were there to protect the workers. I was still not having much understanding.

JF: So when did you come to Fosatu?

N: In '82.

JF: And what job did you do?

N: I was in the complaints service. And in the administration. Of Mau. I was not really clear about the jobs which I was doing. Because there was this Fosatu project which didn't have anyone, it was just a project.

Then there were those individual workers who used to come to the office with problems. They'd been dismissed, they'd been injured or anything like that. So I used to concentrate on them more than in Mau, because I was employed by MAU.

So each and every day, I used to have complaints for the whole of the day or in the mornings go for campaigning. So, In 1982, I was not very clear about what I was doing in the unions, until in 1983 I was with MAU and Fosatu again, until June.

Then I worked for Transport and General, so I was concentrating on the Fosatu and General workers' project.

Ncont: So, I was more on the complaints side, like I'm doing, handling the complaints.

JF: So before did you not have a proper job, you were doing clerical work? What were your jobs before?

N: I was doing typing and helping these unions for campaigns. And doing complaints. I used to have a stack of jobs, because I was taking here and there, here and there.

JF: Now, what is your job?

N: Now, I'm in complaints and from '82 I am there. Then organising in the afternoons.

JF: And what does organising mean?

N: Organising to recruit workers. But now, it's not like in '82, where we used to have problems with the workers not knowing the unions.

And the workers used to say we cannot join the unions because we see all those working for the unions are being detained. One day we hear that the offices are closed.

And not having really any understanding of the union and the problems of the union. In those days the blacks were not allowed to join the unions, so the organisers or the officials of the union were being detained or banned. Like here even in Fosatu, some other guys they weren't there and others were detained and others were banned.

So, getting the history from the people, I was able to explain to the people that look, in those days when people were detained and the offices were closed it was only for the whites not the blacks.

Ncont: So the government now says blacks can join the unions.

JF: And (?238) has been detained and all that.

N: And since they've asserted that the blacks can join the unions, those unions should be registered and if it's registered there's no problem.

But SAU is not concentrating on the workers' struggle. So that is the problem why SAU officials are always detained.

JF: Do you think that's wrong what should they be doing?

N: Now from my understanding, I don't think there is much there of the union teaching the workers politics, and their rights.

If they could concentrate and educate the workers, they must know their role in trade unionism. Because most of the workers believe the union is for the officials, or the union is the office.

They don't have the understanding of the union. And they don't know the meaning of the union. So the role of the officials is to teach the workers. They cannot alone fight for their rights or for their wages if they are not strong.

JF: So, do you ever go to meetings of political organisations? The UDF or anything.

N: Ja I do attend them.

JF: So do you think union people should be in the UDF?

N: No I don't think so. Like the problem we have



Ncont: Like the problem we have of UDF and the unions which affiliate.

JF: But do you think that workers shouldn't go to UDF meetings?

N: No, they should attend those meetings. They have to attend those meetings and as we as officials we attend those meetings.

JF: And now do you?

N: I do attend them, I do attend them.

JF: Are you a member of the UDF?

N: No, I am not a member. I do not think anyone who is a member of a union should be a member of the UDF. Nor its affiliates.

JF And do you ever meet blacks who say you're in a union that whites are controlling?

N: Ja. I do.

JF: What do you say to them? Or what do they say first?

N: They say how can someone who is oppressing you fight for your rights? How can the employer tell the worker, look you are working for me, so I'm going to get someone who is going to help you when I'm giving you problems. So do you think those whites are fighting for those blacks for their rights? If they are fighting for your rights are they getting a salary? I say yes, then they say why are they not working like the blacks, because those people are sacrificing, why are they not doing the same thing?

N: Do you think they are really, really trying to help you?

JF: And what do you say to all that?

N: I explained to them from my experiences and what I saw of the union. And for that matter, I work with Jeff, who I think is one of the best guys here. Most of the experience, most of the Knowledge I got from him.

JF: And do they ever say that whites are controlling too much?

N: Ja, they used to say that. Most of the positions are being held by whites, you don't have a say, they dominate you, and they are the people deciding for you, you cannot decide anything.

JFWhat do you say to that?

N: I explain the structures of Fasatu and which people are deciding for who, and when.

JF: And are they saying whites shouldn't get involved in politics? Have you had any experience where any people in the union have said you shouldn't be involved in politics?

N: I had that problem in 1982. I was confused because I was not interviewed here. But one day we had a discussion about how I viewed the ANC, is it working right. So those questions they used to confuse me.

I don't only look in something in one direction, or look to that person, I used to broaden my mind. The way they asked me about the ANC they used to be negative.

N: So I used to think o, again. I would still think o they are a problem, because if someone is against the ANC it means they are against the blacks again.

So now and again I was becoming confused. But reading, from hearing how the others worked. Like there when Barbara Hogan was arrested and sentenced. So there were whites who were involved in the ANC. So again I was not anti white.

JF: Who was asking you that?

N: That was in Fasatu.

JF: So what do you feel now? Do you feel you can be supporting Fosatu and supporting the goals of some organisation like the ANC?

N: Ja. I am not really supporting Fosatu because my aims and attention to come and work for the unions, because I believe that most of these workers who are joining the union are becoming more enlightened. And they know they can differentiate what is the right organisation.

And the ANC is banned, so I don't think we can be anti-ANC, because the people who are working there and sometimes it used to confuse me listening to the radio Umkhonto we Sizwe;

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Ncont: and from listening to the radio and reading their books, from my previous experience I have my own belief now. I don't think there is anyone who can tell me what to do.

Ncont: These days with the prominent leaders I can see there's no-one who's got the right direction.

JF: what are you saying? You supporting it doesn't matter in terms of Fosatu or anything?

N: Not actually in terms of Fosatu. I don't believe in any organisation or in anything now. The only thing I am concentrating on is the workers' struggle. I don't believe in anything now. My belief is that if all these organisations can come together like Fosatu is having all these talks now, I just pray that they can come together.

If we want justice or equality we can only get that through the workers' struggle. I believe that if the workers had gone on strike, the Government will involve itself on that.

Because I believe that if there can be a national strike in South Africa all the workers said no they are not coming to work, then everything would come to a standstill.

And what I've experienced of the school stayaways, the police come and beat them, but if the workers went on strike they'll go and ask why those workers are not working. And they won't go there unless called by the employer. If we can fight, when we think of the government we think of Botha, but the employers are controlling the wealth of the country.

So they are part of the government.

JF: Did you say from listening to the radion you became anti-ANC?

N: No, I am not anti any organisation.

NcontWith the bombing in Pretoria you heard in the news that the ANC are the people, they have accepted the responsibility of the bombing.

But seeing that the Government can react in that way what they've done in Maputo, going and revenging themselves. So I saw that the Government and the ANC were fighting because in Maputo some innocent people died, like some innocent people died in Pretoria.

And what they've done in Lesotho. So I think that the ANC is right. Because they are aiming at a particular target and in that particular area you will always get innocent people.

So it's a problem that the ANC is basically not working here, so it's very far. And they are aiming at places where most of the things are being done in that particular area. Like bombing the Transkei consulate in Transvaal. They know why they are bombing that particular place.

Each and everything that they've done they know what they are aiming for.

JF: How do you think South Africa's going to change? Do you think it's going to be through the workers taking over the factories or do you think it's going to be through a guerilla war, or do you think it'd going to be both, and do you think it's going to be in five or ten or how many years from now is it going to change?

N: You know in 1984, last year, I used to think the workers are coming all right. If we can have this new federation all these people will come together. All the workers, all the factories are being unionised.

Content: We can speak with Botha because we have the majority of the workers in one federation. So we have all the chances, we have all the power to go through to Botha.

So, now I've started to change. Because things are coming very very hot. Now we are slow in unionising the workers and it's going to take some other time again to educate the workers. Other workers not in Fosatu, because in Fosatu we have some workers and especially Nkatha, and having people who have been in Ngatha minded. Having Nkhata doing all those funny things and killing people. And all these people are the Nkhata workers.

So which means that even within the workers and now having the UDF you see that within trade union organisation we've got two types of workers. Pro-Inkhata and Pro-MDF. Again we've got pro-Azapo people which means that even the workers they don't have the right direction. They don't know which organisation they must support.

So we'll have the same problem again if we think that we are going to change things in South Africa. And again having this business of dis-investment, we know that some other workers are pro and some are anti disinvestment.

Which means that within the workers organisations we don't have same direction, and how the things are happening and how the outside organisations are working and how the ANC is working which means that we don't really have a prominent role in the - in changing South Africa or doing anything here because now it's power struggle or we don't have weapons, and now you must have weapons when you are fighting.

Ncont: with this confrontation with the government now. If we think that - there is that belief that something which is written down, or if we think that we are going to change South Africa by going and negotiate, there is no time for negotiations now.

And knowing that most of the people there is no time for negotiations now, that time negotiations were supposed to be done in 1960 when Nelson Mandela and other people adopted the Freedom Charter or the government just has to concentrate or just go back to the Freedom Charter and wish as far as I am concerned the Government is not interested in.

Then there are other Afrikaans organisations like the Broederbond which really hates black people. And from the experience in the Transvaal - because the people there are the ones who experience the ruling of the white government, and from what is happening in the Transvaal if you can hear that there were whites in a car, if they saw a black man they kicked him.

JF: Let me ask you some questions just to wrap up. When you were saying are you organising workers specifically going out and doing that?

N: Yes.

JF: When you organise workers do you tell them this is a non-racial meeting?

N: Yes I tell them.

JF: Do you think that confuses them? Do you ever think there's a problem? Why is it important that they know it's non-racial?

N: They should belong to one union because we only have strength when we are all in one union. Not having many unions and one factory. We must have one union. So we have Indians and blacks who were supposed to join the union. We have some whites in (?123) a certain guy came to take the forms and he signed but from - because I asked him many questions but I think the only thing he concentrated on was on money.

He only mentioned that you know that I'm only getting 332 pere week, and I said Jees 332 per week and he said this is very very little, I need more money.

JF: So are you saying that the workers you talk to, when you say this is a non-racial union do they like that? Or do they think it's a bit strange?

N: Before it was a bit strange, but through the other unions having people like Jeff we used to go to the company and saw him in the meetings and the other thing that impressed them, if we are having a general meeting they saw how he fights for other companies and how he - in the meeting how he'd tell them of this job and so on.

So, if you make an example of a factory and you tell them that this guy was doing this or that for this factory

J F: This white guy? N: Ja JF: Then they'll accept this?

N: Ja.

JF: Where do you live now?

N: I'm living in Umlazi now.

JF: And how long were you at Fort Hare?



N: I was only for 1981 and February <sup>March</sup> 1982,  
so....

JF: And you were kicked out there? You were expelled?

N: I was expelled in the Ciskei again.

JF: With all that you're talking about now, what does Rev think? How does he feel about the unions and the UDF? Does he feel the same as you?

N: Rev - he works with the UDF because now in Cape Town - the General Workers' Union was helping the community in Cape Town and Rev used to help the community and Zola a woman who is working there.

So with the coming of UDF Rev joined it and he is a prominent man like Oscar Mpetla in Cape Town. You know the problem if there are funerals if you are not a church goer when you die you have no reverend. So Rev used to help those families.

So in the UDF if they are going to do something they'll call him. Rev you are old what do you think? They used to with the other youth organisation they use him. So he's still the Rev I used to know he didn't change on that.

JF: Does he feel the same way about UDF. I thought he was more supporting wanting people to be in UDF?

N: Ja. With youth.

JF: Does he feel the same way as you or is he a bit different?

N: He's a bit different. He is a bit different. My little sister is in the executive of the SRC in Cape Town, so I remember in January this year Rev told her to attend a meeting in Athlone and he said I was supposed to come down for a dinner with Boesak because Kennedy is coming. And my sister said O what's important in the coming down of Kennedy? And Rev said Kennedy is quite a good man and she said O Rev man your politics and my politics are not the same. She's got the same feelings like I used to have.

But she supports mostly the UDF which I think is the only well known organisation because Azapo is not well known in Cape Town. But UDF.

No he doesn't explain much now like the way he used to do to me. He's likely changing. I think it's because of age because he's too old now.

JF: And how do you see the society in the future? Do you think it will be a non-racial one? Do you think that things will change and it will be non racial?

N: I don't think there's going to be any changes.

JF: No, no I mean do you think South Africa is going to stay this way forever or do you think the people will change things?

N: There are some parts of this country there are things changing, but from what I saw in Natal - here people are racist. So I think it will be very hard for them to change.

Because you know now we are having this fight of the Zulus and the Indians and they are even fighting against the other blacks.

Ncont: Saying that you are a Pondo, you are a Xhosa. So there are places which are very very backward. In a big place like Natal we are going to have some problems.

Because I know with the Cape there is no problem, with the Transvaal there is no problem. I don't know about the Orange Free State because I've never stayed there.

JF: So why are you talking about non-racialism if you don't see it in the future? I mean you're in a non-racial union.

N: This thing is just worrying me from the experience I had in Natal.

JF: What experience did you have?

N: This business of discrimination. And this conflict.

JF: What kind of discrimination?

N: Discriminating Indians, and blacks. Because I'm being discriminated because I'm a Xhosa, I'm not a Zulu. The Zulus are the best people, the important people, the educated people, the big race - this racism, as if they are the only people living.

And Zulus are the only people who can rule. This thing of having one ruler, a black ruler. I don't think it is going to work because having one leader, then we are going to have fights amongst the blacks.

JF: So do you think that in the future there'll never be non-racialism?

N: I don't think the future will be non-racial. Theoretically we can become non-racial but practically I don't think it will be like that.

JF: So even if South Africa is changed in the future it won't be non-racial?

N: I don't think so. Let's say South Africa is non-racial you can stay in town, a black can stay in town. Here in Natal there's much less chances of that, because people here are very very tribalistic.

JF: And do you think that in the unions you are seeing some improvements to non-racialism?

N: The Unions can help on that to teach non-racialism.

JF: No but do you think over the years you're seeing an improvement?

N: Partly in Natal, I don't think there can be any improvement. Asking the younger people they would tell you, you know this is an inborn thing, it happened a long time ago, in the time of Chaka. It is inborn. An old man who is so tribalistic and to see that there's a young man who knows that even the next generation will be like that. Because it would be better if you could see that at least the younger generation is enlightened, you don't get anyone who is so tribalistic. Especially if they're young. They are the people who are too tribalistic.

JF: Do you think if the ANC took over the country people would say no this is no good, it's Xhosas it's not our people?

N: Ja we will have that problem here.

JF: So you think people won't support Mandela because he's not Zulu?

N: Some of them the enlightened ones, but I think it's about ten out of a hundred will support him.

JF: So what are you doing all this work for? It doesn't look like there's any hope.

N: There can be hope if we can have this new federation.

Having all these unions under one umbrella, working together with with them. Teaching workers because they don't teach workers. That's why we still have this in Natal.

JF: Who doesn't?

N: These other unions like SAU. I don't even hear that there's a seminar but I think if we can have this federation there can be some changes.

JF: So what have you learned from the union? When you're saying that they should be teaching what have you learned?

N: From the experience I have there have been seminars.

JF: Teaching what? In a simple way what's the most important thing workers must be taught?

N: They must be taught of the economic situation in South Africa. They must be taught of the role of the Trade Unions, the history of the trade unions. Like some of them don't know anything of what is happening in South Africa.

Like last year there was this thing of the constitution, the '83 constitution.

Ncont: Some of the workers didn't know anything about it. But in Fosatu it was being brought to the workers. What do you think, what do you see?

Like this dis-investment we have seminars on it. Workers are being taught and they have to make their own way how they see dis-investment. This business of Uitenhage, each and every thing which is very important or which is the talk of South Africa is being brought to the workers.

They have to decide what is their attitude to it. If there is a new law which has been brought, the workers are taught, not just on the company side or on the employers side but generally with the Government.

JF: So one last thing - do you feel now that you are totally non-racial?

N: Ja I can say I'm really a non-racial person now.

JF: What does that mean in practice?

N: In which way?

JF: You're non racial what does that mean in terms of your - of what you want to see for this country? What your goals are.

N: We must get jobs, equal rights. No job reservations because if they can scrap these job reservations and the group areas act.

Like I have many friends in town but I know that if I stay some people who don't actually know what job I am doing said I am a sell-out. If I attend meetings at Azapo they say no this one is staying in town

Ncont: no this one is staying in town so she has to be a sell-out. I know that if I am in town I am not safe I can be arrested for trespass.

If all those laws that are restricting us from the white areas and the whites from our area, I think that can be OK.

Not only scrapping the other laws like mixed marriages because that is ridiculous.

JF: So if that's useless what should really change?

N: The group areas. They will still have problems because the mixed marriages, because the group areas is still there.

JF: When you see in the TV or the newspapers the young people throwing stones at buses and those being shot by the police do you ever think this is too much violence or can you understand why there is this?

N: I think, maybe it's because I'm growing. These boycotts are coming to a climax you know. This business of stoning the buses it's not a serious problem to me. But the problem that I saw which is very pathetic is the problem of seeing people being banned. To me it is changing everything that I thought the boycotts were for.

And I don't believe that schoolkids have to go on boycotts for two or three years, I don't believe they benefit, I believe they are losers.

But if they can work together with the workers we can get something from that. Just banning people saying they are sellouts, stoning the buses, went for about a year not writing exams, they are wasting the money wasting our time. Because I believe that the thing we need is to educate ourselves.

Ncont: Then we can be able to see what is wrong.  
And we can be able, if it comes to South Africa being  
free, then anyone can see what positions he or she can  
take.

But by staying at home burning and looting it won't  
help South Africa. It's just killing people and most  
of the innocent people are dying.

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