

<b>INTERVIEWEE</b>	Zwelinzima Sizane
<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2007
<b>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</b>	John Vorster Square



Q: Please tell us your name and what you do now
A: My name is Zwelinzima Lucas Sizane. Presently I'm working for the ANC in Gauteng as a secretary for political education and trade unions.
Q: When did you first come to be detained at John Vorster Square?
A: I was fortunate in that I was amongst those who were the last to be arrested amongst core activists that go back to 1971 in the high school student movement. I was detained at the end of July 1976.
Q: How old were you when you were detained?
A: I was 19 Years and a month or so.
Q: And how would describe your arrest in JVS?
A: It was an unfortunate situation in a sense that I'd gone to one building, that's in Eloff Street, to try and go and rent offices for the high school student movement, SASM (South African Students Movement) because at that time I was national organizing secretary for that organization and when we got there SASO had their offices there and when I got there I found SB is already there. I gave them an incorrect name. They left us, let off the SASO offices and came back and I went about going back to the office manager to arrange for an office for SASM. And then I went back to SASM and it was around lunchtime so we sat down and had lunch and when we came back they then decided that we are the youngest. Myself, David Kutumela and the there was Tebs Machoba. There was another guy who was a SASO member but from the University of Ongoya and the fifth one was then administrative secretary of the Black People's Convention and we were all brought here to John Vorster Square and unfortunately on me I had my Dompuss, then a reference book and a bankbook of SASM. I had just withdrawn five hundred Rands that I had to send to the Eastern Cape. That's how they then identified me and immediately they detained me as a Section 6 Terrorism Act detainee.
Q: Were you taken to the cell immediately or were you taken to interrogation first?
A: When they identified me they gave me a very thorough brief beating of something like 30 minutes. They were happy. They'd been looking for me from the 16 <sup>th</sup> June 1976. After that beating I was taken to the cells and I was taken to cell 204. I was there for something like 6, 7 days.
At that time they were interrogating one of the younger members of SASM, Seth Mazibuko and unfortunately for them whenever Seth used to come back in the evening we would discuss what did they say what and how should he respond to some of the questions that he didn't respond to,

because one we had to safeguard not only ourselves but firstly the interest of the movement and also those who were still outside.

Q: Are you saying that you were kept in the same cell with Seth?

A: No, No, different cells. But we had a way of communicating. For instance, you would open you windows, shout across the corridor or if someone was next to you, you would flush out the water in the toilet and then talk through the pipe. But with Seth I think he was in cell number 210. I was in 204 so the information had to be relayed and if I'm not wrong the person who was doing that was Kenny Ratshidi who was then the president of BPC.

Q: This interrogation, do you remember where it took place?

A: It was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, that initial interrogation. The first SB who interrogated me was Dilima who was a former Mozambiquean but ostensibly rumour had it that he was part of the Portuguese Intelligence prior to FRELIMO's taking over and he fled to South Africa and he got employed by the South African Police. I think had they continued using him, probably I wouldn't be here today, I would have been dead because he was much more professional, he was much more brutal, much more clued up when it comes to torture methods but also his interrogation method was a bit far advanced than you know ordinary Security Branch Police in South Africa. Fortunately he was chief interrogator for something like 2 to 3 days and then thereafter they then took me to the local South African SB's. I wouldn't recall their names but what I know is that they were always reporting to a then Captain Cronwright. The person who was doing more of the beatings would be Struwig. I think those were the two.

At first they would take me from in the morning around 8:30 I would be here. 9:00 they would start. 4:30 or 4:00 they would take me back to the cells. But at that time all one had to do was to collaborate what Seth had already told them so that we don't implicate those who are not yet arrested. We don't compromise the student movement in as much as we safeguard ourselves from being charged and that continued until such time as they then said I should write a statement because they couldn't come up with anything that would incriminate either myself or any other person.

At about that time one had witnessed some of the comrades who had been tortured, broken, but not permanently broken, who would implicate others such that when I began to write that statement I used to recall Fanon's writings on detainees, the torturer and the victim.

The psychological interactions, psychological battles as you get interrogated, how do you stand up to your torturer, what mistakes not to commit as a person being interrogated. That assisted me a lot. I think I picked that up in his book called "The Wretched of the Earth" and, well it's about the Algerian experience. And what I told myself was that let me not play it ignorant. I was national organizing secretary. (TAPE END)

(CONTINUES) Whatever I had to write had to talk to my interrogator in a sense that I had to assume leadership as the only national leader in detention then of the high school student movement and begin to position myself politically. Engage them in what Black Consciousness was, but of course my politics were beyond Black Consciousness I think by then I was schooled in Marxism and Leninism and Black Consciousness was just a façade to undertake all that political work and I engaged them around those issues. They would try and want to put names to them but there was nothing incriminatory about talking about Black people beginning to fight against any inferiority complex. Nobody could be charged for that and at the end of the day, after finishing, they brought in some Commissioner and I signed the statement, it was not incriminating anyone.

They then transferred me from John Vorster Square to Norwood Police station and at Norwood Police Station they would then pick me up in the morning for interrogation until such time as they realized they are not getting anywhere. They then made me to stay overnight, standing from in the morning. First day, second day, on the third day without sleep, without water I would eat standing, interrogation was continuing interspersed with assaults. It was only when I felt my head going dizzy, I realized that I was tired, exhausted, let me not give them some leeway where I might find myself not being in control of my senses that I then said that on the day of June 16<sup>th</sup> after Hector Peterson was shot and after Tsietsi Mashinini had addressed students I had then gone around, being driven around students telling them to disperse back to their homes as they do so they should burn administrative buildings, of course I didn't say that. It was part of the task of the underground but I didn't say that.

Fortunately I was using for the rest of the day to co-ordinate and marshal the columns as they were going to converge towards Orlando West, a car that belonged to the Rand Daily Mail. It was driven by the then photographer at Rand Daily Mail, Gabu Tugwana. Then there were two journalists but they used to be called reporters then, Nat Diseko and Nat Seraje. They were partly organized to provide this transport of the Rand Daily Mail to be able to marshal, co-

ordinate the columns and do one's tasks but at the same time they were there to get first hand observations for them to do their work too and one knew that none of the three could be coerced to give false information against me but partly they were also covered by a law that begins to say that journalists cannot be coerced to give evidence. But remember at that time African journalists were not considered to be journalists, they were reporters, a technicality but it was unfortunate. Of the three, Nat Serage was ultimately detained but he wasn't asked about this. After I'd implicated myself around that they were then happy, they took me back to Norwood and I think it was nearer the march that occurred in August, it was August 13<sup>th</sup> from Soweto. Students from Soweto trying to march to John Vorster. I think it was stopped at New Canada. It was round about that time because already there were rumours that I might be dead.

We had our way of even communicating with the outsiders. For instance, when I was in Norwood police station there was Principal Mathabathe and there was Cyril Ramaphosa in the same police station. So I wouldn't know how did it come about that I was missing from Norwood police station, nobody knew where I was.

But then they tried to march, they were stopped and then I think it was the following day that they allowed my mom and my sister to come and see me and their first comment was, "You've grown fat," I used to be very, very thin, because I was nice and swollen. She was just acknowledging that you've been through it and you might still be through it, just put up a brave face to give her encouragement, she needed it too, much as she was strong politically and all that.

And after that they left me for some time and then they then transferred me together with another detainee, they transferred us to Number 4, Johannesburg Prison, the old one and one stayed there for something like two, to three months.

Then on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1976 they then brought one from number 4 to John Vorster Square straight to cell number 201. I just managed to put whatever plastic bags that I had of fruits and what have you. Straight to offices there on the second floor. The first question was that I should not be *harde gat* (hard tailed). They actually tore the original of the statement I had written and told me that I was playing a fool; this is not what they wanted. They now know that I have connections with the ANC. I must talk about the ANC, and I told them I knew nothing about the ANC. If they

thought I knew about the ANC then they could charge me for whatever the activities that they perceive to have being ANC activities because I knew that at that time they had no clue, nothing around my activities as an underground operative of the ANC from 1974. And they then started beating me. I think they had brought in a special unit from Springs. Amongst them was a Smit who later on joined NIS. There was one other one who used to look like almost an albino. They brought in an electric generator and told me to strip and I told them I'm not going to assist them to torture me. If they want to torture me they would first have to strip me unconscious. Two, they would attach those terminals probably when I'm dead. Their entry point they were trying to say that, whom in the ANC were we in contact with, they failed, they couldn't get anything from me around that. Ultimately they got frustrated and they started using chairs that had steel frames to beat me. Of course whenever they would assault, already I was bleeding through the nose, the mouth, I would spit back my blood at them, just to get them angry. A tactic that begins to say once they are angry they are not going to be able to think rationally and as professionally as they are supposed to be as interrogators. Once they are angry they will boil up and use whatever, so they did that until they beat me up.

The next thing I woke up, I was back in that cell 201 on a mattress. Taken to the showers. I couldn't walk. The whole body was paining. When I got into the shower, which was opposite cell 204, there was Jackie Selebi and someone else. Jackie Selebi recognized me through my clothes and said, "Ow! What have they done to you?" and then I realized that I couldn't feel sensations on my face for instance that I must be pretty badly swollen but I would walk ten, twenty paces I would have to stop because the pain was unbearable, the headache was unbearable. It was like you are revving a two-ton in my brain.

After washing they then took me to the office block on the second floor, continued to interrogate me where they left off but I think by then they were doubtful whether I knew anything about the ANC. Whatever I think at that time they might have picked up, they might have picked up around my comrades in the high school student movement whom they managed to get information to have been directly linked with the ANC.

They interrogated me for about a month without taking me to any doctors. By the time I went to a doctor the swollen face had subsided but I was still in pretty bad shape. When I was in pain, I would ask the ordinary policeman who would bring the detainees food that can they call a doctor?



One of the doctors, one of the SB's, in fact we used to call them doctors, would bring in aspirins and say, "Take this", you know antibiotics and that," I'll look at him and say, "Ok it's fine." But even two aspirins wouldn't help and I eventually stopped taking them.

Towards the end of February after they had made me to rewrite my statement I gave them almost something similar to the first one. They then took me to see the district surgeon who was allowed to examine me in front of an SB, wrote down answers from the SB that I'm just suffering from a headache, it could be strain, I was never assaulted.

In December there was a major raid of all ANC activists, almost all in Soweto, Jo'burg, the Transvaal in particular and amongst those arrested happened to be my closest colleagues and comrades in SASM, Rola Masehla, Super Moloji, I think he's the present South African Ambassador to Algeria now, the former NIA Director General Billy Masethla, Matthew Morobe who used to head the communications, now in the President's Office. On the day that they were arrested they managed to get word to me that should they be detained, I said they should never mention my name in connection with the ANC. Of course at that time there were about three cells, underground cells, that one was running, of youth, mainly of the ANC and had done quite a lot of work and post '76, probably we might have been a bit reckless politically because already there were engagements around where should the Black Consciousness Movement be aligned with. Should it be the PAC, the ANC, or should it project itself as a unifier of the two and then form one political organization for the liberation efforts in South Africa? One, being ideologically grounded, felt that uniting with people that the ANC had failed to unite with, there'd been a front when Oliver Tambo had left the country and it had failed because of the intransigencies of the PAC and knowing BC elements and we had already made major inroads to the extent that I think by then, 1976/1977, right up until the banning of the BC Movement bar for King Williamstown around Steve Biko, the majority of Black Consciousness Movement had already been recruited as ANC underground activists and it was to prove to be the almost end of the influence of Black Consciousness. From 1976 the Black Consciousness become a non factor in overt and even covert, well it never had covert politics but in covert operations it was nowhere, even when it established its armed wing.

After that one of the SB's then said to me they will keep me in detention, they will keep on renewing the Section 6 clause on me until I broke, until I told them what I knew. I

think that was the only time I laughed at my interrogators and told them "Ok fine, I'll enjoy my stay here".

And then in April they released me to Norwood police station. From Norwood police station, I think I must have had something like R3 or so. But what I know it was enough to take a taxi from Norwood police station into Jo'burg. I went to Rand daily mail offices. Fortunately Gaba Tugwana was there. He called my mom and took me home. But I only slept that night of my release at home and immediately I had to go back to the underground and continue where I had left off and the challenges were more because, much as we had to then continue leading the high school student movement, what became key was word from my commanders of the ANC in Swaziland that seeing that the structures of the ANC had been crippled -Jimmy Kruger had boasted about it - I should reconstitute those structures, which entailed first having to go visit the Pretoria Twelve who were on trial, the Joe Qabi case, have one on ones with Joe Qabi. Of course I would go there using a false name, be allowed to be his visitor and we would discuss and he would give me all contacts and I did that all, reconstituted structures in Soweto right up to Limpopo, reconstituted structures in the Eastern cape, bring them to Soweto.

Thereafter sometime around August 1977 I got word from the ANC that I should leave the country because Boers were after me and had I been detained for the second time, definitely they were going to link me to the ANC because by then the then leadership of the SSRC in Soweto had been arrested and some of their key members amongst them Trofomo Sono, I took him out of the country. There were others: Modimo, the present Admiral of the Army. Before he left the country I was to have taken him out. We discussed, set a date, but he left a day before which means that my activities were known by the high school students' movement then of Soweto. My having to leave the country was because of whatever actions that the Boers were preparing to do to the ANC they had prior knowledge thereof and then I was withdrawn into exile.

Q: Do you think that your detention had any psychological effects on you after your release?

A: No because I think one had prepared oneself from around 1975 or so because one realized that being in the underground of the ANC is a matter of either being arrested, ending up in Robben Island, if your interrogators get a breakthrough, or dying in detention or being killed trying to cross borders, or exile, and you resign yourself to such options about your future but of course with the optimism that you will make it through, you will be amongst



those actual ones that will reach freedom day. It didn't have any effects except probably physically mainly because from the interrogation of December 1976, even now I still have pains on my right hip. I do walk with a slight limp. It's unnoticeable. I did my military training in Umkhonto We Sizwe with that pain and I have lived with it and it's no bother. I do some physio-exercises; continue gyming. I think that's one constant reminder about detention and at the end of the day one had steeled himself of such an eventuality and I think I'm better off, I'm able to run, I'm able to do a number of other things. There are comrades who can't even walk on their feet who are victims of this place. Some didn't make it. They lie buried, some in unknown graves in this country. Not even the TRC process could reveal, for instance, where Stanza Bopape is buried. Those are the realities that one had to live with and still hope for a better future not only for oneself, for people as a whole, both Black and White.

Q: And for you today as a South African what does John Vorster as a building represent? When you see this building, this building still looks the same, it's still in the same place, what does it mean to you?

A: It might look the same but I think there is one thing that conservative Whites in South Africa should begin to realize, that the name changes do play a role in terms of healing past experiences. This building, I no longer see it as John Vorster Square, to me it's Johannesburg SAPS station and it's good that it is as it is. It should not be painted any other way because starting from our own kids, the youth in this country, we should be able to tell future generations about this building as it is, used to stand for this, people died here and lies were told about them that they flew out, they slipped on bars of soap, that's the reality, but the changing of names plays a role in terms of not attaching painful memories around some of these buildings.

**END OF INTERVIEW**