

INTERVIEWEE	Jabu Ngwenya
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I am Jabu Ngwenya. My other name is Gabriel Ngwenya. Born in Botswana. I was brought back by my parents. My mother was a domestic worker and she used to work around here at Jeppe. My mother came with me from Botswana when I was 2 months old and I was brought up by my grandparents in Alexandra township. After that we moved to Soweto. So when people say I was born in Botswana, I have never seen myself in Botswana. When I opened my eyes I saw myself in Alexandra township.

Q: So Jabu can you give us a little bit of background of your political involvement, how you got involved and what you were doing politically?

A: How I got involved, I grew up in Alexandra so I went to a Catholic school, Holy Rosary. While I was in Alexandra I also became an altar boy. I was also involved in a structure in Alexandra called The Legion Of Mary. That structure that I was involved in; they used to teach us how to visit the poor, sit down, talk to them, clean their houses and so on. So that's how I really started to be conscious about really poor people. My grandfather had some few cows, where I stayed in Alexandra. We stayed next to the Jukskei river, that's where our cattle that we had from my grandfather. My grandmother ran a shebeen and that shebeen that we had from Alexandra there were lots of patrons and other people who came and so on. People came with meat in order for us to sell them alcohol and so I would say I was better off than many other kids that were in Alexandra. So when I started visiting people in their houses and seeing what they are as a child then I understood in terms of the way they grew up.

And also in Alexandra where I used to stay we were not far from the area where Whites were staying so I used to see them with their bicycles going to school. So because of that I was also saying to myself I wish that I would have a bike because to have a bike, it was a most difficult thing to have. So I was looking at the way they were dressed, the uniform, the shoes and school bags that they had. So then to me, I became conscious to say what happened, what is happening? By that time I didn't have an answer to say why these children are different from us? And that's that as a child as I grew up because in Alexandra we had everybody, every nationality: we had Chinese, the Indians and everything, you know we had different nationalities and we had all tribes: Zulus, Sotho, Shangaan and so on. So that's when I picked up most of the languages that I understood from Alexandra.

When my grandfather passed away then I moved to Soweto. In Soweto I went to a Catholic school again and then I was also quite actively involved as an altar boy also from the Legion of Mary and so on. Then those things really opened my eyes to be conscious and that's that.

During those days I had colleagues and friends of mine like Rola Masinga, Billy Masethla, Super Mloi and Tsanki, lots of those people. Further to that, through my activities in church and so on I met a man who really made a mark on me called Reverend Majathula. His nickname was Castro and he introduced me to

Black Theology, also to what we call Liberation Theology and I started meeting with Beyers Naude. I met with Doctor Kisner. Those who were really spiritual fathers that brought me up, I never had time in a real sense to spend with my father in a way because when I grew up my father used to be a person who disciplined me, beat me up and so on. So I have never learnt much from him, I have learnt lots of my discipline and my upbringing from Majathula and Beyers Naude and Doctor Kisner. That's how I got exposed.

When I got exposed from all those people at the same time during that process I was immediately in one way or another being recruited to the underground structures of the ANC. I worked with people like Joe Qabi, Elliot Shabangu, Phillip Matthews. So those were people that I had links with and then even when Joe Qabi left the country I had contacts with him outside the country and my friends, I would call them my comrades and my friends Rola Masinga, Billy Masethla, Amos Masondo. And then I was interacting with lots of organizations at that time. I worked with Black Consciousness organizations; I worked with all organizations in a way but mostly I was involved in starting structures of organizations. Like when most organizations were banned and so forth, then I worked with most people of Black Consciousness like Mabaso, Ishmael Mkhabela. There were lots of them; the names are endless. So during that process that we formed AZAPO. I was part of setting up AZAPO and so on and well we saw things in a different light. I had also being instrumental to set up COSAS, which those people from Black Consciousness were instrumental to help and assist us through their experience, through their resources. At that time I got my instructions from outside the country to set up COSAS in a way to say this is the kind of thing that you need to do. It was important for us to set up an organization of students because at that point in time we needed people who could read and write and who weren't carrying lots of baggage. When you look at the side of workers they were really carrying lots of baggage because they were looking after their children and their parents and on the other side when you look at the youths, most of them were unemployed so when you recruit them, they were looking for employment then when you look at the university students they were about to finish and become doctors and so on. So the grouping that was ideal to all of us was students from high school and technikons. So that's where we started to set up the organization that was COSAS. Most other things grew out of that organization, from workers structures; community based structures and so on because students are part of families. So they are many in one place but also they are part of the families that they come from. So it was easy for us to reach out to their families because the students were loved by their mothers and fathers so when they engaged them on day-to-day issues it became much easier.

From there we were instrumental in setting up the UDF, which was I, Vali Moosa and so on and so forth. We were the ones who set up an office and we worked together with Vali Moosa and then from the COSATU side in order to bring different unions

because I used to work for the union called GAWU (General Workers Union) with Rita Nzanga, Samson Ndou, Poloto, Shabangu, those people who were instrumental but then what we did is that we came together with the unions that we see alike, MACUSA from Port Elizabeth, SAU from East London and Durban and so we came together as the so-called Progressive Unions because we were very different from other unions in a way because we saw our role from the community, as a community because what happens is that at work situations we had people who were workers, at home they became a family and so on. We believed that we can play dual activities. So we pushed it, then from there that's when we started to negotiate with people like FOSATU, FAWU. But FAWU already we had ways and means of working together with FAWU in a way because there were lots of our comrades in FOSATU. We met with people like Alec Irwin, many, there were many of them that I can call. We had initial negotiations in different levels and so on.

So those were my activities in a way but I'm just cutting them short, there were lots of them. So I've been from as I was saying, from the students, the youths, the churches, the women's organizations. I worked with all structures, I never worked with any single structure because I worked with churches; I was quite actively involved nationally, not just only in Johannesburg. Then within all those organizations we had campaigns to keep them alive, to keep them working, to keep them doing things and driven and so on. So briefly that's that.

Q: Can you remember when you first became aware of this particular building John Vorster Square and what that meant to you and your comrades at that time?

A: Ja. When I became aware of John Vorster it was bad stories from comrades, people who were in detention, who were arrested, who went in and were tortured and so on. Different people used to tell me what happened to them and what took place at John Vorster. By that time I had not been really detained or detained in John Vorster. At that time I heard from my comrades to say there were people who can torture you in such a way that you will die and so I got scared that I will die if I get there or I go in there. But then people like Shabangu, Rita Nzanga, Joe Qabi, they really gave me strength. And people like Rola Masinga, in a way they really boosted my morals in terms of saying even if you are going in there as you are involved there, this place can be hell in a way which I never knew hell in a way until really I was detained and brought in here in John Vorster at some stage.

Q: When was the first time you were actually detained and brought to this police station? Can you describe that first experience when you were brought here?

A: I don't remember, was it 1977, somewhere between 1977 and 1978, between that time, I was detained. The police were looking for me on several times but the place that I had been detained in several times and been taken in and released and taken in and released most of the case was Protea Police station but John Vorster I was brought in here I think in 1978.

Yes I was tortured at some stage up on the 10th floor where they

took us. They used to make us stand, and then you stand for hours without anything and then they would take your clothes off, you will be naked at times and then they will make you sit on your chair and then you sit on the chair and then they will remove the chair you know as if you are sitting on a chair, and then you squat like this (demonstrating) for hours! So then you will sweat and sweat on your own. I don't know you will just start crying because of the sweating. And then they will kick you and swear at you and so on. By that time they need information to say what are you doing? Who are you working with? So for us it was not to really tell them what they wanted in a way.

Also in here in cells in John Vorster you will find people crying, people being incriminated. Some of the things were just very painful. People would come and shout and say "You know they say I know this person, I know so and so, they say I know Maake and I don't know this Maake, who is this Maake, can you help me?" and so on. You know the police will say those types of things; the next time is that, that boy you heard is dead and that's that.

Q: Jabu were you kept the first time here in a single cell or in communal cell?

A: In John Vorster I don't think where we were, I for one, there was any communal cell. It was only single cells. So I have never stayed in what we call a communal cell since my detention until after State of Emergency.

Q: Can you describe your experience of being in that cell and what was your day-to-day routine in that cell?

A: The one that I remember quite well because I was with different people at different times because what they did with me while I was here in John Vorster during that time in 1977/78 I was quickly changed immediately and transferred to Protea and immediately from Protea I was taken to Mondeor Police station.

But then in 1980 or 1981 I was detained then for quite a longer time. I was in Sandton Police Station, and then I was brought up here in John Vorster again. During that time it was the first time that I was with Whites, Blacks and Indians and so on. But usually, during my times of detention there were not lots of White people that were detained but by that time there were lots of White people who were detained. And in my head, my understanding was that Whites were not people who were beaten up, you know? By that time those White people, my comrades that I had, they were tortured, tortured badly. Lots of them were tortured badly.

So I saw that that was a bad time and I had a big feeling to say something big is going to happen here in a way because they were planning to say they are going to make a big treason trial but I felt that the way they were, they had a team of police who were really wild at that time. I have never seen a team of people who were really like, you could see they wanted to kill, you know, in their eyes and they way they were doing things to us, the way they were talking to us and the way they were pushing us.

So in the cell where we were because of the experience that I

had from my times of being in prison I used to sit down and teach my comrades that, were here in John Vorster, how to communicate in prison. So we were in the cells where we were but we will communicate. What we will do is that we wouldn't talk through the door. We would go and talk through the toilet. When I talk to you and say, "I'll phone you in the evening" it means we will take out water from the toilet, make sure that we take out the whole water, then we would put a blanket on top of my head and then I can hear a person quite well. It was like a real phone call. So we would have what you call today a telephone conference. So all of us would be talking what happened to us, what took place and so forth.

We would also send messages as we were bathing. You know as we bath you know the wall used to be steamed and a little bit dirty. So we will write messages to say, "If you want this information that we are talking about you will find it here." You know we used to hide things and then we will write on the walls and then when you bath then you will find things in your place. You know like those types of things, where we were bathing, you will tell me where you put your things so I will write a letter or anything. We used to smuggle most of the things outside the cells.

Q: Do you remember, Jabu, any particulars of the toilet telephone conversations that you were having. Do you remember any of those conversations in particular or an event that stayed in your mind that you shared with your comrades?

A: The one that I remember vividly, quite well is the one that we were sharing to say that Neil Aggett had passed away so after that we had a service. So we went together down there and Frank Chikane was the one who conducted a service at that time. A memorial service for the doctor.

Q: So you did that through the system?

A: Ja, through the system there underneath and that's that. After that we stood up and then after that we started singing. That was when Neil Aggett died. That was one of them.

But secondly is that when we were inside here all of us always had debates in terms of when you walk out of the prison what is happening and so on, what is taking place? We spoke about our problems, what happened, what did they ask you, what is happening? Who is detained, who's being brought in and so on, because they were bringing lots of people because they brought people from Port Elizabeth, East London, everybody was brought in. So we were discussing to say who's in who's not and so on but the other things that we used to discuss is to say when we leave this place what are we going to do? Then we discuss and debate and in other things we disagreed to say what must we do to set up something for the workers and whatever that we have in order to learn and to workshop for the workers. Who is going to be in charge of writing it? Then others will say, "You must consult," and then we would say, "No we don't need consultation, on this we need to bring people of same minds who understands most of the things like to draw up papers and so on then we can debate about those things, about the syllabi that we are looking to put forward in order for workers to understand it."

The other debate that I remember vividly that was that we saw the police what they were doing they couldn't take us to prison, they didn't have a case. But what they wanted to do with us, because they did not have a case. What they did is that they knew that if they make us the so called state witnesses to a guy who is not high profile, who has never been quite actively involved so much then they will be able to send us to prison because we refused to testify. So that was the debate that we debated in prison to say to testify, is it a principle or a tactic? Then we debated so much, it was a principle, it was a tactic until we came out to say no it's just a tactic, it's not a principle. So it depends when you testify what are you saying. So to refuse to testify, not to say anything you can be sent to prison then to jail because the police have seen that in a way you are that. So those were the types of other debates that we had.

Q: Did you worry about being caught out and were people ever being caught out while they were having these secret communications?

A: No we were not caught out. We were lucky we were not caught out because we were very careful. They'll come and check us then we will stand and sit, but in some instances the police will catch us out when we were speaking but I think the only fortunate thing that they never had is that they didn't know what to do when we were speaking underneath in the toilet system.

Q: Did they punish you can do you remember being punished or your comrades being punished for breaking the day-to-day rules inside the cells?

A: No, you see there is a difference when you are arrested under section 6 or section 29 and so on. That time our punishment was meted on top there at 10th floor and being tortured but here when we speak the only people just to say something to you to tell you what you are supposed to do and so on was an ordinary policeman. So we were defiant of ordinary police but the Special Branch will be interested for you to talk indoors and so forth when you speak and so on so that they know that when you speak they will pick up that information.

But let me tell you that at that time the most painful thing it's when I saw Neil Aggett several times when he showed me how they have put electric shocks to him, how he was. He was really down, down, down. I couldn't believe it. And then when I met my comrades, because I knew that because a black policeman came to me to say Neil is dead. The Black policeman, then I told most of my comrades immediately to say Neil Aggett has died.

Q: Was it your interpretation when Neil died that he had been killed by the police or that he had just been forced over the edge which seemed the to be the position that Bizos put forward at the inquest?

A: I know because I testified in that inquest. I believe, I, it's my own personal opinion. Neil was, they were beating him up everyday. They were beating him up and swearing at him and so on. There was a place where I for one was interrogated on the cells; I could see you know at some stage they were mistakenly thinking that Neil Aggett is there. He is in the place where... they

went in as coming to kill, as they went on me with wild eyes, six of the tough fellows you know, huge, strong fellows! And they found it was me and they asked where the cell was and we showed them that it was the other one and they went. I could see from the glass, I could hear the noise that they were busy with him in a way, beating him up that he must talk and so on. On that basis, yes, the truth can only be told by the policemen, people like Struwig, Cronwright if he is still alive, Van Niekerk. Those are the real people who can tell and give light to the family of Neil Aggett. I don't believe that Neil Aggett killed himself because the way we were, the cells even if you can look at them today, these ones are much better, those ones by that side, it was a glass, if you can go there. So to kill yourself there it was impossible. To hang yourself and put something honestly is that...I don't know how you can swing and so forth you know. I'm just saying by that time I think Bizos, they did that in order to bring the plight of death in prison in a way to push it further because they kept on denying, they denied everything you know, they denied everything. At that time well they had powers to deny but to me I believe that they killed Neil Aggett. He was killed on that time as they were beating him up. He died there and they brought him back to the cell.

Q: During that particular detention. You mentioned you were detained several times, you were kept after Neil Aggett's death in 1982 for a number of months, is that correct?

A: Yes!

Q: Were you continuously being interrogated during that period or was it that at some point the interrogations stopped but you just remained detained?

A: Ja it stopped but I for one had lots of problems. I had lots of activities and I would be brought in and brought out, brought in and brought out. You know I was taken to Vereeniging at some stage to one police station. I also met and saw people like Prema Naidoo. They were badly beaten there, heavily, heavily beaten I for one was that torture to me, already, I wouldn't say I mastered torture but I'm just saying it never shocked me or brought anything to me, the way I have been tortured, the way they did things to me. Like several times. Let me give you an example. You know at times they would say I'm not speaking or saying anything; I'm not prepared to speak. It was winter during most of my times, like now. They would take my clothes off and make me to stand there and go get a bucket of ice water, with ice inside and pour it on top of me and open a fan all the time and I wouldn't be able to speak or to say anything. So those were types of other things that they used to do, beat you up, put electric shock, put a canvass bag and tighten it on the back for you to speak.

So what I'm saying is that most of them, people who went there couldn't really take it in a way but I'll say really my strength that came into being, my strength was to say the ideals and things that I stand for are the truth, and also my background from the church that I was religious helped me a lot. And also in terms of knowing to say that this struggle is a just struggle and this cause is a just cause that I live for or even if I can die it was a good cause. So those things made me quite stronger.

Then also as to answer you to say that was I... yes I was. From time they would leave me for a while, at times they would pick me up again and take me out that's why I'm saying it wasn't that I just stayed in John Vorster only during that time, I stayed in John Vorster and then I would be brought back to John Vorster again.

Q: Did you get a sense of you being taken all over the place, that there was logic to what the police were doing?

A: Let me tell you, like myself, because I have been in detention several times and so I would boost morale of people. I would boost their morale that they mustn't feel bad, they mustn't feel to say that it's the end of the world, it's a cause that we are in. and because of that I knew the police would remove me because of the kind of influence that I had in giving morale. So to them they would say, "Put him aside! Put him in other places where he won't be able to communicate." Also the police, the system; these people were very highly sophisticated, they were not fools so at times they will take you to a place in order to see a person to check if you know him or not and how much you know each other. From those type of things people think it was just a ferry ride, they were moving you in a way to get a sense to say who are you? What is happening?

Q: Do you develop any relationship with any of the policemen, in terms of interpersonal relationships either with the security police or down here in cells with ordinary police?

A: I developed a lot of relationships with Black policemen. Those were the ones who smuggled my things home and to my friends so I used to have a good relationship. My duty was also, I used to recruit and have police to work with, so I worked with them a lot and what I mean by that is to take my things, to take messages outside and so on. They were tough but the security policemen you could not rely on them in most cases. You cannot believe in them.

The specific case that I remember quite well, there was a policeman here by the name of Cronwright who was in charge of most of them. So Cronwright tried to recruit me from the Christian point of view but recruiting me on the side of giving me books about Watergate.

Most of them like this guy called Nick Deetleefs, for example, he tried to recruit me to work with him. He said to me "Jabu work with us." You know police will always recruit you but I just got fed up with him because I knew what he used to do that he used to beat up Barbara Hogan and my heart was sore you know because he used to boast to me about how he used to beat up Barbara. "That bitch! That White bitch!" he said. And then from there he recruits me, so I got angry and then I told my lawyers. I said to my lawyers "This man is making my life miserable." It was that time when they charged people and I wasn't charged and then they told me they would like me to be a state witness. Then at that time I was allowed to be free. So the point that I'm bringing to you is to say there were times where police were dirty that they would say you work for them when you don't work for them. They would go around and say to people, "This one works for us."

One day remember I was driving along with one fellow in Port Elizabeth. I left the hall with him to go buy some drinks and then this chap whom I think had had a few beers, he was drunk. He didn't know who I was, he asked me who I was and I told him I was James and he asked where I was from and I told him "From Bethlehem" and then they said to my friend "Hey why are you busy driving with this man? Why are you not in the meeting? We have paid you so that you must report to that meeting, now you are walking around" you know those types of things. So if you are petty you will believe that this man works for the police and yet not.

Q: You were mentioning the story of Cronwright.

A: Cronwright came to me and said to me, "Jabu, here are books" And he gave me different books. The books that he gave me to read were books on Watergate, where people testified and so on so I read and for me it was interesting to read because you didn't have anything to read while you were inside. You only had a Bible to read. So after that I went to him and said "These are two different countries, I'm a South African and I'm Black, I don't have rights to vote, I don't have a say, I don't have anything, and also being a Christian"... from then he was harsh and hard on me. And Struwig at some stage spat in my face. So those were the kind of things, but I didn't care it was part of life.

Q: Can you remember the cell you were in and your sensory impressions of that cell?

A: I was upstairs in a cell where there was thick glass, bulletproof type of glass where you couldn't do anything. And this side also there was glass on top of the bars all over. So that cell was very isolated. You felt at times as if you're mad. You will think until no more. But then because at times you could not go out. And then the smell, you become part of the smell, as I say taking water out of the toilet by pushing it with your hands from the toilet itself. The smell was a non-issue. We would speak inside it. So the smell was not part of an issue at that time because you become part of it. When you enter at first it smells bad, but you become part of that smell and every morning you go and shower. And then the policemen will say to you "Jy stink!" but you had a shower. But it was a way to bring your morale down.

Q: When you showered were you able to communicate with other detainees or were you kept in isolation with other detainees?

A: To shower?

Q: Yes

A: It was one, one. It was rare to shower in two.

Q: How long did they give you to shower?

A: About 15 minutes. And then they quick you must go. At times they will give you about 30 minutes.

You know they did not take me out and then again I had a friend of mine called Thozamile Gqweta who was an opposite of mine. He was released because they felt that he was a bit mad. So also I decided to play mad and then I pretended to be mad by jumping and crying and making a loud noise all the time, in the evenings and shouting and pushing the door. So they decided to take me to the psychologist in Johannesburg Hospital. But to me it was, you know when you went out, I think it was a paradise, to see people

and to see cars was a relief.

Going to hospital, this man who checked me I was shocked about him, the psychologist. He was wearing everything in the same colour, his socks, his shoes, his trousers his shirt, the only thing that I couldn't see was his underwear. So all the time he wore clothes of the same colour. If he wore dark brown everything has to be in dark brown, if he wore black, everything has to be in black. He told me to walk like a model, he showed me to walk like a model and come to him. To lift my hands like this (demonstrating) and then he would watch me from a distance and he would also tell me to change my facial expression whilst I walk to him. And I laughed, I just laughed. And then he wrote a report saying I'm normal and I was taken back. I did not go for counseling.

A: Did you have any visits in your cells from the district surgeons or magistrates? Were you ever visited by any officials other than the police?

Q: After Neil Aggett died, that's when things started happening. When Neil Aggett died we started to become privileged. We got radios; we started to get some few books. But the radios were not playing well. I don't know what they did with them at John Worster because they were not playing well. And then we had a retired judge whom we were told would come and talk to us but it was not really helpful.

A: Can you describe what did he come to talk to you about? I mean were you able to describe what happened to you?

Q: He would ask "Were you tortured?" and then when you say "Yes" then he would write it down, "Were you badly treated?" and then you tell him "Yes this is what is happening." You know things like exercising, "Are you exercising? Do you have an hour? Do you have this and that?" all these kind of things. But let me tell you it was just a setting up because of the international world and the consciousness of people. And we were lucky as I was saying the light part of it is that there were also Whites in the whole thing and that brought a different thing to all of us. So because of the death of Neil Aggett, the struggle does different things. Because of his death, life became much better for all of us in terms of treatment and all other things that happened to us but we were still not allowed to talk to each other. But then this judge will note things and one day as I was telling him, "These are my problems with my food, my clothes are not on time," this guy said to me "This is not a five star hotel! You must never think this is a five star hotel, you must never think this is a five star hotel. We are just here in prison because you are a terrorist." And I got shocked. And I was fed up with him.

Q: In terms of people that complained about treatment and abuses that took place you didn't see any results?

A: No the abuses were nothing, they were part of nothing. Even the district surgeons, I wish to see to see the reports from the district surgeons that used to come. I remember the guy that used to say "Headache, and all the problems that you have etc, and they would write that you have hypertension but they never reported that you were tortured and so on but on the script for medication and ointment they would give correct things.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about being in solitary confinement and your experiences of solitary confinement?

A: My experience of solitary confinement is that you are alone in the cell, you can't talk to anybody. You feel that the world has closed up, you don't have anyone anymore. You feel a bit scared, that there is nobody around to help you; you are on your own. Anything can happen to you. So all those things, you see yourself vulnerable to anything in life generally. So briefly I would say that was the feeling but the strength that I had was through the exercises and the prayers and having hope to say what I'm here for is a good cause. So that thing never destroyed me, it did nothing. I was fine.

Q: How long did you spend in solitary confinement?

A: My longest in the different times was 18 months but I would be six months, five months, three months and so on. So I have never been with people in a communal cell. I have never tasted that. Even locked up at John Vorster during the time of State of Emergency I would be locked up. Other people will be locked up in Johannesburg Prison but I would always stay alone. So I would be under house arrest and all these types of things.

Q: Did you ever receive parcels from the outside or anything like that, did you have any kind of communication with family or lawyers or anything like that?

A: I was lucky because when they took my messages to home what I taught them at home was that they must not respond. It's just that I was just cautioning them that these are the things that are happening, and also I did not trust the police; I just wrote a friendly letter saying I'm longing to see them. I am still alive, and well. Fortunately and luckily those things used to reach outside to my families. So some of the letters that I used to have used to be stored by Dr. Kisner. He had since died; I don't know where they would be.

But then I was lucky because I used to steal newspapers when I was in police offices and hide them in my trousers and bring them with in my cell so I could read and destroy the newspaper. You know when you read the newspaper when you are in prison; the world opens to you. You feel you are in a different level. And also you know the newspaper, the way you are so thirsty for news, you can read the newspaper just today and finish it off, even sports, horses, and adverts. I don't know how it works out, you grab things so quick. You are like a machine as you read. Unlike when I'm outside, to read a four-page document can take me longer time but when I'm in prison I'll race to read.

Also I was lucky as I was saying from the Black policemen I knew who had been brought in, and then I would prepare myself to say so and so is arrested, it means my line of case, this things may have been said. So I would align myself to hear what they would ask me and also they will tip me to say "Jabu you have changed." Even the White people who had not spoken to me would tell me that "Jabu you they have changed your detention, you are no longer under section 6, you are in a different section now, so don't feel scared, you have a right now of certain things." So you will see my family coming etc.

<p>Also while I was imprisoned in the other place I used to smuggle friends to come in like in Vereeniging where I was, because you see the security policemen, they wouldn't be there in most cases like on weekends. So I used to have friends and they would get me money. So I used to have money. So when they come I would give ordinary police money because we were dealing with ordinary police, then I would get visits on weekends and stay with friends and they would bring at times some soft drinks and some alcohol at times.</p>
<p>Q: But that was impossible here? This was a much more difficult place?</p>
<p>A: No here you will never because it was in a way differently but when you were in other police stations it used to be much easier but here it was very complicated. They used to search us and leave us to go for interrogation or when you go to bath they would lock you up in a place then they search your cell thoroughly because they knew we smuggled things in. We smuggled letters, we wrote to each other, we send information and so on so that used to happen here.</p>
<p>Q: So you didn't receive parcels or those types of things?</p>
<p>A: Ja, after the death of Neil Aggett, before then it never happened. You know there was the DPSC, that the parents of Neil, I was with Keith Coleman, Auret van Heerden and different White people Like Firoz Cachalia and so on.</p>
<p>Q: Were White detainees treated differently to Black detainees?</p>
<p>A: No they were not. At that time they were never, they were beaten. I felt that they hated them more to say what are you doing? Because this thing has nothing to do with you, what are you trying to do? I think they had most difficult times that they never had in their lives. It was tough. It was heavy for them and they were rejected by their society they had a tough time. They never had good times.</p>
<p>Q: Was there anything in the day-to-day existence of being in this police station that you looked forward to?</p>
<p>A: You know there was a friend of mine who died, Eric Ntonga. He nearly collapsed. I told him, "Eric in this place you can stay twelve months, you can stay ten months," then he went, "Hey!" Then I said, "You can stay ten months, you can stay twelve months here, you can stay eighteen months." Then I even quoted them to say in Zimbabwe how long people stayed. So people used to get shocked. So I said to them, "Looking forward to go home or to be charged, don't think it can happen now. It can take long. You can be here forever, you can be here for five years, it depends." So you will be looking forward even to be charged. If there was anything to be charged, because if you are charged then you will be sentenced then you will go to a communal place. So you know that I'm going to serve a sentence but then at that time you will be waiting because you know if you're an activist- there are lots of things that police wouldn't know which they haven't picked up. So as they arrest and detain people then you will be called for interrogation, at times to be beaten. So there was no end in the whole thing. So you will be kept guessing.</p>
<p>Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the food that you received while you were here?</p>
<p>A: Let me be honest with you, here the food was ok. It was better</p>

than any other police stations. The food that they gave us was much better than when I was at the Fort in Number 4. There the food was rubbish, but I'm just saying here it was better. And to be fair with you, I never had much weight. I started to gain here. I'm talking about my body, because the food was ok.

Q: How have your experiences in this place affected you emotionally and physically?

A: Emotionally I would say it has affected me in such a way that you don't see it immediately but you'll see it after a long time in most cases because there are times that you are in isolation and you want to be alone. You don't want anybody next to you. So for your family it's tough for them to understand that you are in that level, in that state of mind. You feel withdrawn, that you need to be alone. And you moved but you came back and you are OK. But it's not OK, in terms of the family. And secondly because of the electric shocks that I used to have, so anybody if I'm sleeping, even my wife, as she touches me at the back, I jump. So those are physical things, I just jump and wake up. So those are the kinds of things that I'll say physically are still there. Even if I try. If can feel anything on top of me, a hand, or anything I just jump because I think there is electric shocks on me.

Q: Can I ask you your feelings about this physical place, John Vorster Square now called Johannesburg Central Police Station, does it hold any special positive or negative feelings for you?

A: The only thing that I can say about this place as I came here, right now, it brings bad memories, it doesn't bring joy because I know that lots of people lost their loved ones in this place. I'm talking about the families and the nation. Today we are recognized as leaders but could we have those people who were held here and who died here and some of them who are mad, I'm talking of psychologically, some of them are affected, everywhere they are sick because of that, some of us wouldn't be recognized or stand as leaders because those people stood high and would have been my leaders and they would have taken this struggle more forward, more ahead because those people were brainy, some of think we are brilliant or better but those people were better and far, far ahead of us. So the country has lost good people that would have been part of running this country.

So on that level I would say this place is bringing bad memories but I believe that as the policemen can also understand the conditions that they worked on and understand who they are and I also think that the problem is that the police had not done the transformation on transforming the police who used to be part of the old system to go for counseling. Most of these people tell themselves that they are fine and strong but most of us did not go for counseling, but I have been helped and assisted by the church. But I think the biggest transformation is that all this policemen has to go for transformation because you'll find that even if you sit with them or talk with them, they are full of anger and frustration and they are not looking forward to day-to-day work that they are doing today. Society must be made aware that these are the cops that are protecting them or protecting their society but people then because of not getting credits and respect from the community, people talk about corruption, and all these things, bad things, negative things about them. Is simply

because the policemen also did not move and there was no move from the state to counsel them and I believe that we lost good cops, especially White cops who were experienced because I believe that the majority of the black cops were treated as puppets. They never had a significant role that they really played. So I think the taking off of experienced cops to move them out and replace them with Blacks, it was prematurely done. I think there was supposed to be some way of doing it to avoid having the problems that we are having today.

END OF INTERVIEW

