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TM: Tshepo Moloi

DM: David Masina

Interview with David Masina

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TM: Can I please put on a date first?

DM: Okay

TM: Today it's the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2011. It's Tshepo Moloi and I'm at Hospital View in Tembisa with Mr. Msane

DM: It's Masina

TM: Why do I keep on referring to you as Msane

DM: Msane it's Amos Msane. He used to be our colleague in the civic.

TM: Yes. I'm with Mr Masina David. We are going to do an interview on behalf of SAHA Oral History Project. Mr Masina I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for welcoming me in your home and agreeing to talk with us. To start off can you please introduce yourself: what are your full names and who is Mr Masina?

DM: Ja. Masina is David Masina. I was born in Standerton. At the age of about three years my parents left and came here. By then this place was called the Witwatersrand. And when they got here they stayed at Modderfontein. And from Modderfontein they moved to Benoni.

TM: They stayed in Benoni?

DM: Yes. So that is where I started school. I attended at ... By then it was still called Methodist School because schools were classified by churches. There was the AME (Apostolic Methodist Episcopal), Dutch, Roma (Roman Catholic) and so forth. So, I attended my primary there. And from there I went to attend in Daveyton and that it's where I did my high schooling. And then when I left Daveyton after high school I had passed my, by then it was called Junior Certificate ...

TM: Oh, yes

DM: I went to do, by then it was called Teachers' Course. Thereafter it was called Teachers' Diploma. It was called Teachers' Course at St. Chad's in Ladysmith.

DM: Yes. I didn't complete it. And when I came back I taught at a private school ... not private, but a farm school. That farm school was called Mehlaeng.

TM: Mehlaeng?

DM: Yes, it was Mehlaeng Primary School. I taught there for about two years

TM: Where is Mehlaeng?

DM: Mehlaeng was at Bredel

TM: Whereabouts is Bredel?

DM: Bredel. When you leave Kempton Park towards Benoni.

TM: Oh, okay.

DM: Yes. And then I left. After that I joined an insurance company called Home Trust. That's where I met Robert Serote.

TM: Oh, at Home Trust.

DM: Yes, at Home Trust. And we were insurance urgents. We were selling insurance. When I left there I enrolled with Damelin and I did Human Resources. I got a Diploma from there. I joined Edgars Group as a Junior Manager. I left and worked for Checkers Group, working as a Personnel Officer in the work of business. And I took a course with UNISA (University of South Africa) in Labour Relations That's where I got a Diploma. Then I left and joined a Pharmacist company called Wyeth – W. Y.E.T.H., as a Junior Human Resources Manager. I left and joined again another Pharmacist company which was called Smith Line. It's an American company. Then I got a sponsor from USAid (United States Aid) and went to Philadelphia to a School of Business Leadership, and did a Diploma there.

TM: Wow!

DM: Yes. I returned and worked there. And when the company moved back to America I remained behind and stayed here and then I opened a supermarket at Mashemong. I opened it and then left that supermarket.

TM: What was it called?

DM: It was called ... Why do I have to ... I will tell you what it was called, because I got that name from the previously owner. There's a young guy who was opening up wholesales here in Tembisa who was called Chicks. What was the name of my supermarket? I'll tell you

TM: Yes, it'll come back to you.

DM: So, I left it and became a property consultant, and worked for some few companies like Primax, New Bond. And when I left there I opened a Spaza shop, Khaya Take Away. And I was working with my son, of which it's still operating even now.

TM: Wow!

DM: Yes

TM: Where is it located?

DM: It's at Mfihlweni. Yes, that is my work history.

TM: Wow, it's very interesting. If I can take you back just a bit. You said you were born in Standerton. When was that?

DM: Eh, it was 1945.

TM: Where about in Standerton?

DM: I said I left there in ... What are these rural areas called Boesmanspruit - it's when you leave Standerton and take the road to Leandra - not very far. I think it's about ... Because I've been there

several times; that's where my grandfather's tombstone is at. I think about thirty kilos [kilometres] from town

TM: From Leandra?

DM: Yes ... No, from Standerton.

TM: You said your parents left when you were three and moved to the Witwatersrand. When they arrived in the Witwatersrand as you were growing up what were they doing?

DM: Oh, my mother was a domestic worker and my father was a carpenter.

TM: Mhhh, was he self employed?

DM: No. By then you were not allowed to be self-employed. You had to join a company owned by white. By then there were people who were doing [sounds like Tresses]. Do you know They worked with wood. You would find a person wearing an overall (work coat) fastened with belt full of nails. He'd be carrying a hammer, hammering in woods. They called that person a carpenter. A carpenter was doing these Tresses and stuff.

TM: On top of a house?

DM: Yes, on top of a house. For instanc, like this house ... Some times he would work at the bottom of the house. You see, what they'd do was to place these tresses on the ground and measure them first. After doing that they'd place them on the ground and hammer them with nails. After that there would be other people who'd come and help you. They'd pick up the structure and put it on top of the house. And then you start to connect with steel wires. Others with cement. And then you put on the tiles.

TM: Oh, okay. Right. What were your parents' names?

DM: My mom was Nomacala and my dad was Judas – they're both late.

TM: Oh! Okay. How many were you at home?

DM: At home were five.

TM: When your parents left Standerton to settle in Modderfontein?

DM: Eh, when they left what I can recall we were three. And when we got here we became ten. And the five is late and the other five survived.

TM: And at Modderfontein, I don't know if you ...

DM: At Modderfontein ... Do `you know what was there at Modderfontein? There was this thing that people say "O dula mo komponing" (You're staying in a compound). There were married quarters and single quarters.

TM: Okay

DM: At Modderfontein that's where dynamites were made. Some of the people who were there ... You see, at the taxi rank at Sangweni - you see that rank - most of the people who live close to that place some of the young people were born there.

TM: At Modderfontein?

DM: Yes, at Modderfontein. Most of the people there were living at Modderfontein.

TM: Meaning the compounds were owned by the company?

DM: Yes. It was called AECL (African Explosives Chemical Industries)

TM: African Explosives Chemical Industries

DM: Yes. So, the place is Modderfontein. The chemical company it was called African Explosives Chemical Industries. So, people commonly call it Modderfontein. They would be like say 'He works at Modderfontein'. I don't think it was the only company. I think there were about three of them that manufactured explosives.

TM: Okay. So, how was the compound you were living in at Modderfontein if you can describe it - what kind of a place was it?

DM: Eh, it was sort of a Skomplaas or township, where there were children and there was a school where students attended. And the parents also worked there: fathers worked there. Some were at the mines and some were in the offices. And women were working for the whites in the whites' married quarters, because there was a division: blacks one side and whites one side.

TM: Was the place fenced?

DM: Yes, the whole of Modderfontein was fenced. But there was movement and the movement was even better than the one we have today, because today you can't go anywhere. Yes, there was road ... I mean, when coming from Alexandra, passing the Edenvale Hospital, you'd come into Modderfontein. You could even drive through. So, after all these unrests and so on they closed Modderfontein. So, when you go there now you simply go to Modderfontein and you had to have your particulars with you and they would check you and so on. In the past you'd just go there. That is why there were people who were staying there. Even at night you could go in and visit your relatives and go back home again. And then there would be police standing there asking if you have a passout or pomet (i.e. permit) to get in. And when you arrived at the gate you would get ... They would write a note for you asking who you were there to see and you would say. And then 'Do you know the number?' No, I don't. 'And who is the person you are here to see?' And you would say Bongane. And they would tell you not to lose the note the police would come, because they would wake them up at night. There was a night special and then you would show it to them. But it was not only Modderfontein, but every township. You had to have a ... They said it's a night special, because it gave you the permission of how long were you going to stay, because if it was two days, three days after that you had to leave.

TM: When they raided

DM: Yes. Like for instance, there was a wedding. You arrived there on a Friday. You stated that on Sunday in the afternoon you would be gone. Then you could enjoy yourself. You knew all these other things. And then you drank your beer and do all kind of things and then you forgot. Early in the morning on Monday they [police] were going to go from house-to-house checking who was it, because they'd arrive and ask you for a permit and you would give them the permit and they would observe who was there, and then they would ask to see them and ask who they were and where was your permit. If you didn't have, they'd take you.

TM: Oh! That's how they arrested them?

DM: Yes, that's how they arrested them.

TM: So, at home at Modderfontein where you were staying was it a house?

DM: Yes, it was a married quarters. It was a house, partly cemented with sand.

TM: How big was it?

DM: Eh, well it were three-roomed houses most of the time.

TM: And life there, because you have shown that there were schools; parents were working and all that. When they were not working what would they normally do on weekends?

DM: Hey, it was super. You know how black people when it came to sport. You know, that they could manage that easily. There were [sports] grounds there.

TM: Oh, right

DM: Yes, football and everything. People who were living there and those who worked there on Saturdays and Sundays also organised themselves. They had their own teams. And there was a challenge [i.e. they'd challenge each other]. And us small boys we would say we are the A's. We knew that in the morning it's us who were starting to play at 9 o'clock and they were going to give us shirts, because we didn't have the jersey [i.e. kit]. So, we would wear big shirts and pants. And then we'd kick the ball. It was just those activities. There was, eh, what we called *nthoya BaSotho* (the Sotho thing). And AmaZulu would also be doing their thing. And on the other hand it was BaPedi dancing. And on the other hand it were women ... Yes, it was fun.

TM: Oh, there were different ethnic groups there

DM: Yes, there were lot people living there. There were people from Pietersburg. But most of the people who were there were from Lesotho. [You'd hear people say] "Hey monna, ha oa dumeloa mola ke BaSotho fela. Ke ba dikobo fela. Ha ba nyake manga le mang. Ba tla ho shapa ka molamo" (Hey, man you're not permitted to go there. Only Basotho are allowed there. They don't want anyone else otherwise they'd hit you with their sticks). On the other hand, you'd hear others saying "AmaZulu liked to stab people with their spears". You see, things like that. So people who enjoyed to associate with others would go there. But the sports grounds were for everybody. You'd hear people saying "Hey, I'm going to the BaSotho, I'm going to visit AmaZulu, or I'm going to BaPedi. Yes, just like that. And after leaving Modderfontein we went to Benoni.

TM: As family again?

DM: Yes, as a family.

TM: Where about in Benoni did you settle?

DM: We moved to Benoni Small Farms.

TM: What kind of place was that?

DM: It was owned by the Portuguese and the Boers. We stayed there. As we were there, there came a time when ... Because many schools then ended in Standard Two. You see, in 1948 and 1950s many schools ended in Standard Two. So, we were forced to go to places where there was Standard Five. But many schools ended in Standard Two. So, I went to live in Benoni Old Location and stayed there.

TM: Who were you staying with?

DM: I stayed with ... What can I say? A friend ... A sister friend of mine. I stayed there, and went to school until I passed Standard Five.

TM: Now as you were staying there did your host register you in her permit?

DM: No, I was not registered in the permit, but I was registered as a lodger. There was this thing called a lodger's permit. You lodge. It was written lodger's permit. It permitted you to stay in a place for an undisclosed amount of time. Yes, you would stay there and every now and then you had to renew it, stating that you were still at school.

TM: Did you have to pay for it?

DM: Yes, the owner of the house paid for it. So, I arrived there and passed Standard Six.

TM: Which school did you attend in Benoni?

DM: I was attending at Methodist

TM: Oh, at Methodist. So, at Daveyton it was high school?

DM: Yes, it was a high school.

TM: What was the name of the school in Daveyton?

DM: It was called Mahungele, but it later changed to Daveyton High. Mahungele Secondary School and it changed to Daveyton High. So, I went there and passed JC. I returned and when I got here I went to an adult centre.

TM: Where was that?

DM: Here in Tembisa

TM: Oh, okay. Let me get this right. You were living at Small Farms

DM: Yes

TM: And you went to Mahungele Secondary School, where you did your high school

DM: Yes

TM: And passed JC

DM: Yes. Remember I was about to leave for St. Chads. But when arrived here in Tembisa I went to an adult centre to try my matric, because most of the time ... most of the teachers by then had a JC and a Teacher's Diploma.

TM: When you finished in Daveyton you went to Ladysmith at St. Chads. What was the reason for you to choose it?

DM: Well, there was no particular reason. I mean, you would go there if you were admitted and had found a place to stay. And there were friends, you see. I had many friends saying that I must come; we were going to be a group, because during that time when you go to a place where they didn't know you people would be beating you up. So, if you were clique at least it was much better: "Hey, hey, he is our home boy. Don't touch him. He belonged with us".

TM: So, there you were studying to become a teacher?

DM: Yes

TM: How long did that course last?

DM: It took about three years. So, I did two years and returned, because there was no money to complete. And there were no sponsors during that time. I came back and taught at a Farm school.

TM: At Mehlareng. Getting a job as a teacher who didn't complete the course was it hard or easy?

DM: It was difficult, because when you arrived there you hadn't done lots of things. You found people who had been in the field for "donkey" years and they would say "What is this boy doing and so on?" So, when you arrived there you had to find a good principal and a mentor. A mentor was somebody who was going to guide you and show you how things were done. So, I found a good lady and she showed me everything. Because there were preps, schedule. And there were many things that you were supposed to do. So, you had to do quite a bit. Fortunately enough, it didn't take me a long time. I tried and did all these things.

TM: How long did you teach there?

DM: Two years

TM: When you left there which year was that?

DM: I left there in '72.

TM: Where did you go to then?



DM: I joined the insurance [company]. They said 'Come man. There was a lot of money there. Because if you sold three polices at least you'd have lots of money'. By then we were earning less than R100 a month.

TM: In teaching?

DM: Yes. And the principals were earning R1000 a month. We were earning R50. And if you were lucky there would be R50 subsidy. So, there they would tell you that if you sold one policy you would get R200. And if you sold five at least R1 million. So, when we got there we were working and we realised that we were close to the millions. Then you went around the township. Because if you didn't do that how were you going to get the clients? "Hello mme, I'm selling insurance." How does it work? "You register yourself and your family. And if there was someone who passed away they were able to bury that person. If no one died and you reached 65 you received money." People would say we can't afford 65, but we want the burial one. And then you'd write down. So, we used to sell, eh, lots of polices - funeral polices.

TM: But then at the time where were you based?

DM: I was staying here in Tembisa

TM: Okay. Let's go back ...

DM: While I was at Mehlaeng I got a house here in Tembisa

TM: Oh, right

DM: At Mehlaeng I had a house because, you know, by then teachers could get houses anywhere but on condition that when you left teaching you must take the house back.

TM: Oh!

DM: Yes, they did like that

TM: Back to the municipality?

DM: Yes. That is why when you asked a person where he came from he would say from the Free State, in Bloemfontein, if they had a house here in Tembisa. I'm from ... Most of the teachers who came here in Tembisa and [went to] other places they found houses in that way. Yes, they found houses. Because by then Tembisa, I think, it had one secondary school which was Tembisa High. It was still called Junior Secondary School, you see. And then these people came here and taught. They were not from here. They came here to teach. Then they received houses. Or otherwise you would stay in the teacher's cottage, because most of the teachers especially those that were single used to live in the teacher's cottage. Teacher's cottage I think it was occupied by men. They were four

TM: Sharing?

DM: Yes, they were sharing a room, each with his own bed: my bed, his bed, and his bed. And then we cooked and ate in the kitchen. Just like that. So, I was very fortunate. Because when I arrived here I found a house, a four-roomed house and I stayed with my family.

TM: But the process of getting a house what did you do? Did you have to apply or ...?

DM: Yes, you applied. To be given a house you had to apply.

TM: Before then did you know Tembisa?

DM: Yes, I knew Tembisa because I had a family here in Tembisa, who came to Tembisa when it was established whom I used to stay with and leave again. Tembisa started in ... Most of the people say it was in 1957.

TM: Is this family also Masina?

DM: Yes

TM: Alright. Where were they from?

DM: They were from Small Farm ... No, they were from Standerton but also stayed at Small Farm. Then they came here. It was during that time when Group Areas Act was ripe. The government stipulated that it didn't want black people living in the whites' areas. So, they established Tembisa. And when it started all the people who were ... The whites would give them notices. If you had black person working for you he was not allowed to stay with you here in the plot, farm or ... He was supposed to go and live in the township, and commute to work. So, those people just moved here. After moving to Tembisa ... When it was established shacks were built and many people decided to settle there and no longer went to live on the farms. This was when they started establishing firms in Isando. Many decided to look for work in the firms because there they could earn R2.50 a week compared to the 3 Pound fifty on the farms, because on farm we used to get 3 Pound, which is equivalent to about R9 per month. Yes, so people stayed here and no longer went to the farms.

TM: So, when you were visiting here where were they staying - were the houses built by then?

DM: No, it was still shacks.

TM: How big were the shacks?

DM: Eh, the shacks, because they'd built a shack like ... It was like this room. So, you yourself had to get more iron sheets to extend your house if you had children. The municipality built small shacks, without a window and only one door. That's it. If you were staying there then you could buy yourself poles and extend it yourself. They lasted until, if I'm correct, until 1960 ... No, 1962. Then they started to build four-roomed houses. There were samples. I think the first one was there by the corner and people were saying come and see the brick house. And they went to see it, because Tembisa started at Xubeni. The first school was Marhulane. It's the first school. By then it was called Xubeni Combined School, you see. So, that was the first school. All the teachers were teaching there. So, when they started to built other schools like Shukumane, then Xubeni was designated only for Tsonga-speaking people. Then Tembisa started to spread: Mashemong, Sedibeng, Mangweni. Yes, on this side. And after that it spread until it got to Umthambeka.

TM: Oh, right. During that time they settled you according to...

DM: Ethnically, yes. That's how they settled us. When you arrived here they would ask who you were and you would say "I'm Moloji". Then you were SeSotho-speaking. You were supposed to be at Sedibeng with you tribe, because AmaZulu would kill you (laughs) if you went there. I'm a Tsonga they would tell you to go to Xubeni, because you were a Tsonga. Then you were going to stay with Vhavenda and AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, AmaNdebele and AmaSwati together; and the baShoeshoe (BaSotho), BaPedi, BaTswana together. All these people were placed together.

TM: So, you arrived in Tembisa in the '70s?

Dm: Yes. I when I arrived in Tembisa it was in the early '70s when they started to move in. I was here with my family, the ones who were staying here. In '57 I came to visit them while I was at school on weekends. I was here because I was playing soccer this side.

TM: Oh, you were playing soccer?

DM: Yes, I was playing soccer this side.

TM: Which team were you playing for this side?

DM: I was playing for an Airport team. It was called Sky Master.

TM: Sky Master?

DM: Yes, Sky Master during '56... '57, yes.

TM: When you say it was an Airport team, meaning it was played for by people who were working at the Airport?

DM: Yes. Because teams by then were classified in that way, you see. Cullinan, because there was a company by that name. "Eh, what are you playing for?" – Cullinan. Teams were classified like that in the past, because they wanted you to be in groups just like at school. So, at the Airport there was Sky Master, there was Consolation. I don't remember the rest because people were ... The people that I was attending school with or were my friends their brothers were working at there.

TM: At the Airport?

DM: They called us to come and join them

TM: When were the games?

DM: On weekends.

TM: How was the atmosphere when you were going to play?

DM: Hey, man we didn't have a stadium.

TM: Oh, so where were you playing?

DM: We were playing in the ground. It was easy to establish a ground. It would be announced that this Saturday we're going to establish a ground you must shovels. Hey, we'd go around cutting down strong woods and collecting them. Then we'd placed them around and then we'd have a ground.

Then we'd sprinkle white ash in the field [to demarcate the ground]. This happened until they formed an association. And after they had formed an association at least what they could do was to scrap that area and placed iron goal poles. And now it was going to be under the auspices of that association; it would have rules, referees, and you even got fixtures. And during that time when I was playing some would say it's a goal and some would say it's not. And an argument would ensue. You would stop the game for about 30 minutes for the people who were arguing. And then people would demand a new referee and the old one would be kicked out, or otherwise there was going to be a fight.

TM: They'd also be fighting there?

DM: Yes. There in the ground they would be fighting until someone intervenes and the match would resume again.

TM: What were you playing for – a bet?

DM: Yes, we would bet. But most of the time we played just to defeat each other. There was nothing at stake. Yes, just to defeat each other. Just like at school they would say AmaZulu versus BaSotho, you see. Because our schools were mixed unlike the period after, if they said Wessel (Methodist) or Roma all the people who were attending at Roma - their children who were attending there - ... It was not like other schools. Then they would say AmaZulu and BaSotho you were playing. And we would play. AmaZulu would say we've defeated Basotho and they'd be very happy. But we'd get them tomorrow. And tomorrow afternoon again we would be playing - every day. This is what we used to do, but it was fun.

TM: But this thing of separating people by their race wasn't it causing fights amongst you people?

DM: It did. But, you know, as black people some of us were so used to discrimination to even see it something normal. Some people liked and thought it was a good thing. They'd argue 'when I'm around my people I can speak my own language. I cannot speak SeSotho. And a Mosotho would come and say *Ja, batho bale ha ba nahloho. Ha ba tsebe le molao. MaZulu ha a tsoe a tsamaye* (Those people are rude. They don't even respect the law. They must go back where they came from). But when we grew up and started to read, dealing with all the ethnic groups, you start to understand these people. And when we started joining politics we started to ask: 'Why they say this person is white? We've never heard that this white person was an Italian. They were all called whites. Ay, no there was something wrong here. But when it came to black people they would ask: *Wat is daar die man – Sotho? Nee, Sothos hulle is nie rig nie. Daar die Zulu is nie rig nie. Hulle baklei te veel. Daar die Xhosa, jy steel.* Yes, AmaXhosa had always been associated with stealing. Even Basotho would say *MaXhosa a utsoa. O se ke oa sebetsa le bona bat lo utsoa.* You see, those were the kinds of the things that we witnessed. But as time moved on we then became involved in the struggle. I became involved in the 1950s. When in 1962 the Rivonia Trial started we were already involved. We followed the case by reading. There were some people who were recruiting at our school. You know, when you spoke about the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) there's a young man who died some few years ago here by the name of Vusi Nkumane ...

TM: Oh!

DM: He attended our school and was recruited there.

TM: In Daveyton?

DM: Yes. He was in Daveyton until he came here. And then who is this guy again? Michael, he was also recruited. And now they say he is a motivational speaker. Now he stays at Sandton. He spent something like 13 or 14 years on Robben Island. And Vusi spend something like 15, you see that kind of a gang. Because when they got to us saying what we were doing; we must come with them to study. Then we would meet there and we would be carrying books after school, going to a particular house and we'd place people at different strategic points [to keep an eye on the police]. And we would be busy reading. And when we heard cars, we took out school books and pretended as if we were studying. And when the coast was clear, we started to discuss how we were going to distribute these books, because we had to recruit. And how we were going to recruit these people if we don't know them? So, at some point we recruited an aunty, who was selling fat cakes. We said to her "Take this thing and put it under the fat cakes and tip [inform] all these boys who were coming here to buy".

TM: Oh!

DM: Yes. Any person you came across as long as you could see that this person was a good candidate and that you trusted him. You couldn't recruit a person you didn't know. You had to ensure that you frequented this person's place to speak to him. You'd talk about politics and church issues. The idea was to see where he fitted until you became used to that person.

TM: How...

DM: Yes

TM: What type of a school would say Mahungele – why seemingly there was political activity?

DM: Mahungele, I think the fact that it was the only secondary school in Daveyton and then there were boys whose parents or their siblings were aligned with the PAC and some the ANC (African National Congress), so they would tell them that they needed to be politically sharp and understand what was going on, because what we need to do was ... At school we were taught in Afrikaans. So, we didn't want to be taught in Afrikaans. You'd hear some arguing 'Do you see what they're doing. They're imposing Afrikaans on us'.

TM: All the subjects.

DM: Yes, all the subjects. But there were very few subjects. Because there was *Rekenkunde*. That was Arithmetic. There was also *Aardrykskunde* – that was Geography. And there was *Geskiedenis* – that's History. What we needed to do was to take an English dictionary and the Afrikaans dictionary and compare the two, so that you could be able to see what was happening. It was difficult. Very difficult. But after some time we enjoyed it, because we were encouraged to speak Afrikaans

TM: At school?

DM: Yes. Even in the offices you wouldn't go and speak English, because when they say *Ja, jy dink jy is geleerd ons gaan jou help nie* (You think you're educated. We're not going to help you). *Uit jy gaan* (Go away). This happened everywhere. Hence, even the people from Swaziland couldn't get a job, because they didn't know Afrikaans. And then Afrikaans was very much politicised, you see. And

people started to hate Afrikaans. When you were addressing students and started to speak Afrikaans ... Because the Ministers by then were the Boers ... The Minister of Bantu Education was a white person. When he went to schools he spoke in Afrikaans.

TM: When he was addressing the students?

DM: Yes. They were addressing students in Afrikaans, and no one would do anything. Because by then we would all be in the assembly and whispering *o yalizwa le bhunu* (Can you hear this boer? *Se bono sa hae man* (He's bum, man). But you had to keep it low. Because if he were to point you out and he'd inform the principal that you could no longer attend school there. Or if it didn't happen like that he'd note you and when you were walking in the street a police van would stop in front of you and they would take you.

TM: Do you still remember how you were recruited and by who?

DM: I still remember. The guy who recruited me was John Tshabalala. I'd ask him "Hey, man where do you get all these things?" He'd say "Hey, man I don't want someone who'd ask me lots of questions. It's either we talk now but don't ask me lots of questions about where I got the material. Here is the material. I'm giving you the light. It's either we are going forward ... But don't ask me lots of questions about who did what".

TM: In which political grouping did John Tshabalala belong?

DM: He was in the ANC.

TM: What did he say to you when he met you?

DM: I said to him "John, you are busy going with these guys. What are you talking about?" And he said to me we're studying. This happened until I got used to him. He then said "I want you to come with me and have a look". And when we arrived there I found this gang. They were very clever because the things that they were talking about I didn't know them. I was scared that if they were to find out at home ... Because these guys were labelled the Communists. Parents would say Hey, you joined the Communists you'd die. You must stop associating yourself with such people". People would start hating you. Then I'd think to myself what I should do. But there things they were talking about they were quite interesting. They opened your eyes and the way you thought. They would say "Look, for instance, we're staying in the township. We can't even go and work in certain places. You were not even allowed to read these books, because ... I mean, what were some of the careers opened to blacks then? They'd say you should be a religious minister. You could be a teacher, a Minister. If you were a girl you could a nurse. Men, a police officer. That's it. But when you're walking around and start looking ... Sometimes we would go and work in town for whites and they would ask you *Wat wil doen jy?* (What do you want to do in future?) Or what career are you following? And then you'd answer: *Ja, ek doen standard seven*. And then the white person would angrily say *Nee, man. Ek vra wat career wil jy doen?* I mean, we didn't know about these things. He'd then tell you that he was doing Technical. He'd tell you that he was doing Drawing. I didn't do Drawing at school ... [Mrs Masina greeting]. We didn't know anything about Drawing, because we didn't do it at school. We didn't do any technical subjects either. We did Geography, History, English, isiZulu or SeSotho and everything. And that's it. Otherwise if you demanded to a career, they'd tell you to go and do Agriculture. Then it was *Landbou*. They'd say *Ja, gaan Landbou doen*. It's good for

you because you'd be able use it when you leave school. But if you didn't want to do that 'Go and become a religious Minister', you see. Go and take up ministry, or become a police officer and arrest people who were causing troubling, the Communists, you see. We observed this and concluded that this has got to stop somewhere. When the news spread about the gang in Lilieslief in Rivonia, we started hiding our papers [i.e. materials].

TM: What kind of material did you read, do you still remember?

DM: Yes. We were carrying books that were written. Some were written by [Nelson] Mandela. I lost some of my books when I was already living here in Tembisa. At some point they [the police] were on to us. Some of my books I don't even know where I left them, because I was running away. I was up at Umthambeka and I threw them while I was running. The next thing these people had left and when I went back to look for them they were not there.

TM: Where did you get the material? Do you know where you got it?

DM: We got it from the gang, because you were not supposed to ask where they got it from. They just gave it to you. They'd just say these things were from underground. If I give you, you passed the information to the others and you don't ask the person who passed it to you. He also didn't ask the others where they got it from. It's only underground [people who knew].

TM: So at that time you were working with Mr Tshabalala had you joined the ANC or not?

DM: We were young recruits, you see. But the most important question was: were you going or not going?

TM: Going where - exile?

DM: Yes. You were supposed to leave for exile. So, some of us were scared. We couldn't go, because if you looked at your young sister, the situation at home, your mom and grandmother, and your father is sick with ... then you'd just think 'Oh, I may never see these people again. When I return they'd be long dead'. Some of the young guys would say 'Hey, guys you're still here'. But some would say 'It's good. You remain inside the country. We can't all go. Some must go'. I mean, we'd hear 'Hey, man so and so has left'. You know, the strategy that they were using was that some of these guys would return at night. You know, when you're young you have what is called homesickness. For instance, if you go to the USA and other countries outside, you could feel what's like. You'd be watching television and when they say South Africa you leave everything, even the books, because you want to know what's happening in South Africa. And you'll only get one piece of information, say, about a strike in South Africa. Sometimes, for example, maybe you lived in Alexandra and they'd show something about it. And you'd stand up and panic. So, we remained behind.

TM: Did some within your group who left?

DM: There were some who left from our group. There were lots of people from our group who left. And Vusi was amongst them.

TM: So, when you arrived here in Tembisa you came with your politics already...

DM: Yes. But I hid my politics. Because now you just can't arrive with it just like that. You were suppose to check the coast, because when I was at school you were not supposed to ... At school, because the teachers were not involved, if they heard that you were spreading Communism you were gone. That was why they said teachers were the informers, yes. But you would look at what you were doing and people would say why were you doing this and speaking this way? Why do you hate the Boers? And I would tell them that I didn't hate them, but hated the things they were saying. And they would say did you hear Mr... talking this way? Did you hear how he said it? But, you know, that deep down you didn't. So, when we arrived here I joined Home Trust and I found colleagues who were like Rob (Robert Serote).

TM: Where was Home Trust?

DM: It was at Germiston. There I met Thulare ...

TM: Oh, is that Difa?

DM: Yes. Those were the guys, you know, that if you were talking with them you heard that you were talking with men. They'd say *le he ba karetsora ha hona taba. Ba bangata batsoerweng ba ile monna. Lehla nkashoa ho lokile.* (Even if they'd arrest us it made no difference. Many people have been arrested, man. Even if they kill me it's fine). There were quite a number of guys whom we were with there.

TM: Were they all from Tembisa?

DM: Yes, they were from here in Tembisa. And after that we started recruiting and we joined Wally. Do you know Wally?

TM: Serote?

DM: Yes. We joined him. And he said 'Hey, guys come'.

TM: Just to take you back. You arrived in Tembisa in the early '70s and where were you staying?

DM: I was staying at Mfihlweni.

TM: It was a four-roomed house, right?

DM: Yes, it was.

TM: Who were you staying with?

DM: With my family. The municipality gave us that house, as I told you, on condition that I shouldn't leave teaching. But I had left teaching. When I started at Home Trust I didn't register. The Boers would ask me *Wanner gan jy geregistreer?* (When are you going to register?). *Al die mense het geregistreer is net jy* (Everyone is registered but only you). But deep down I knew that if at all I could take my Pass Book there they were going to repossess the house. Yes, they had informed me that on condition you remain a teacher. If you leave teaching then we're repossessing the house.

TM: How were you working if you didn't register?



DM: Oh, no I was taking chances. Yes, I took a chance. I stayed there I think for about four years.

TM: Not registered?

DM: No. And every day they were telling me the same thing. And I would say I would go next week. And some were saying you have a house why didn't you want to go and register at the office, you see? And the migrant workers who were from the Transkei and Lesotho would say *Wena o beteri ho bane o nale lentlo. Rona ha rena niks but re registerile. Rea tsaba hore batlile ho ribosetsa moraho* (You're lucky because you have a house. We don't have anything but we have registered. We're scared that they'd deport us back to our homes). But I didn't care what happened to me. I wasn't going to register.

TM: Oh, so you were still registered as a teacher?

DM: Yes

TM: Were you getting paid?

DM: No, I wasn't getting paid, because I had resigned. I was scared that if I registered they'd discover me. Remember that the house we were staying in was a rented house. It belonged to what was called the East Rand Administration Board. You know, when you went there to register do you know where they'd sent you? To Germiston. And in Germiston they'd go through my file and find that I was still supposed to be teaching. And they'd say 'Okay, you're no longer teaching. We're giving you 14 days to evacuate the house.' At time went on I decided to ... Oh, I got a post at Edgars and I quit at Home Trust. I went for an interview and they hired me. I went for training at Edgars Group, and I started working there. And then things started changing. The government scrapped the Group Areas Act and I said this is what I've been waiting for ... No, it wasn't scrapped, I beg your pardon. Do you know what the government did? It integrated it. It said from Springs to Kempton Park if you lived in that environ you could find work there. Before then if you worked in Germiston ... Do you know people who stayed in Tembisa couldn't find work in Olifantsfontein. They couldn't work in Isando. Because you were supposed to ... Let's say you were employed at Kempton Park you, you could work at Isando but not at Elandsfontein or Germiston. So, they integrated it so that the people who were from all over the East Rand could work anywhere in the East Rand, but not in Johannesburg, you see. I thought to myself that things seemed to be open up. I continued working at Edgars. But I thought that the issue of working on Saturdays and I can't even meet with the guys and do whatever I wanted to do and so on, it didn't give me much time. But I also no longer wanted to work for retailers. I wanted to pursue my career in human resources. So, now and then I would attend evening studies and workshops. I joined Damelin and got a Diploma. After receiving that Diploma I applied at Checkers. I went for an interview and fortunately enough at ... I can still remember I just said 'Ag, even if they don't take I just want to see the outcome'. Fortunately enough they said you got the job. So, I went to the head office next to End street. I worked there and had an office. I met other guys there: Humphrey Olifant, Isaac Mashaba. You know, those were the guys. And I thought that this was the right place for me. I was now working with [trade] unions now.

TM: Oh, right

DM: Yes. I was working with unions like the Textile, Catering. Yes, those which fell under Saccawu (South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union). We now met and started arguing with people like ... Who is this lady? Mashinini

TM: Emma Mashinini

DM: Yes, Emma Mashinini. She'd shout 'You are the ones who were making these whites to behave like this'. I used to tell them that I'm not directly responsible for these people. But the only thing that I'm doing was to be a shock absorber. And they'd say don't tell us about cars. And I would tell them that I'm a shock absorber. And I'd ask them 'What you are doing to try and improve the ... [situation]?'

TM: Oh, now you were in the management team?

DM: Yes, I was part of management and couldn't belong to a union; and couldn't go and strike. By the way I am a black person and when these people look at me they'd say '*Ja, wena o hlala eLokshini* (Yes, we know that you live in the township). I remember I had a cousin who in Alex, at 8<sup>th</sup> [Avenue].

TM: In Alexandra?

DM: Yes, Alexandra. So, they'd say '*Futhi wena o hlala e Alexandra. Siyokuthola* (We know that you live in Alexandra. We're going to find you there). In our meetings, I had to take minutes and I had to argue like a manager, irrespective of being a black man.

TM: What were you discussing or debating about?

DM: We were discussing lots of issues. We were discussing about working conditions, disciplinary actions. About, eh, so many things that affected the workers.

TM: Say you as a manager ...

DM: You know, they'd bring a person to me and say this guy doesn't do his job up to 100%. Then I'd have to say I want you to give this guy a warning "and the next one I'm going to fire him". But I also had to find out when they said 100% what did they meant by that. Then the white person would say 'No, no, when he comes back from tea it's already late. When I give him a job to do he takes the whole day doing it'. So, I had to think what causes this and ask myself: 'Is it hatred or is this guy simply lazy? So, I had to follow this guy and interview him. I remember there was one guy, Masopha, who was very stubborn. He was from Lesotho. He'd argue that white people were not treating them well and I as a black person in a management position I was there to assist them. Masopha was an old person. Then I'd ask him '*Hey ntate, ke utlwa hore wena o khutla late tiyeng* (I understand you come back late from your tea break). And he'd respond '*Ha ke sofetsi hoja ke etse joang?* (If I hadn't finished eating what must I do?). So, I had to guide him and talk to him: *Khutlela mosebetsing monna. Ka o fela re a sebetsa* (You must go back to work, man. We're all here to work). He'd then say '*Wena o sebetsa mo ofising and ha ona clock* (You're working in the office and you don't have to clock). I'd say 'Well, even if I'm in the office I need to observe time. I know that at a certain time I have to go for lunch and at a certain time have to work'. At one time I heard people speaking about me inside a lift. You see, my office was in the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. They were saying '*Hey, sifuna a hambe a buyele e Alexandra* (We wanted him to leave this place and go back to Alexandra). They thought I

was from Alexandra although I living here in Tembisa. Remember inside the lift there were many of us, including white employees. Then the lift stopped and I went out and I said 'Thank you God', because that's what I wanted to hear. They were shouting inside the lift: '*Ja, sizomthola njengamanye amaPersonnel a hamba. Naye sizomenza a hambe* (We'll teach a lesson just like the other Personnel who left the company. We'll also force him to quit).

TM: Were these members of the union?

DM: Yes, they were the members of the unions. So, I left that job. Then I found another job in the Pharmaceutical [industry]. You know, I realised that sometimes you have to start asking yourself some questions when alone: Was I doing the right thing there? Am I following the right track as far as helping people? Maybe somewhere I erred. I should try and improve. Because when you were in that position you had to improve your relationship with the workers. You know, managers are very difficult people. Because they'd say 'If these people don't want you ,then we can't continue working with people who didn't want you'. But at the sometime they'd be telling me that you've got to enforce; somehow you've got to be on top of these people because it's your position. It entitles you to do that.

TM: Were these the managers who were saying that?

DM: Yes, the ones on top.

TM: They were saying this to you?

DM: Yes, they were saying it to me. When things became tougher they'd inform you these people don't want you. So, I had to try and deal with these people; try and work out some strategy about what I could help these people with. You know, some extra things so that they could start saying *Bare motho ole ha loka but warethusa* (This person is not good but he helps us). You go to his office anytime and you're going to get assistance. If he's unable to help, he'll refer you to someone who could help you. That's how I managed to gain their confidence in me. At least these people knew that I was going to help them. When I couldn't I would call other people from outside the company to seek advice how to assist them. At one time one guy he had slept in the *kitchens* (domestic workers' quarters in the white suburbs) and when the police raided he was arrested. He phoned work and the whites said it's not our problem. I had to take a car and go there. And when I got to him ... I was carrying cash on me and I paid his bail. He was released. Sometimes when an employee was sick and the ambulance didn't arrive I'd take my car and take him to hospital, you see. Those were extras. Then the workers started perceiving me differently. When a white manager comes and said I wanted to dismiss such and such an employee. Then I'd say 'Look here, I understand and I take your point. But nevertheless, give this man a chance. Let him go and work. I'll come to your office to discuss. When I get there I'd try and convince this guy: How long has this person worked for you when you claim that he stays away from work? *Jy's baie lang hiers, tien jare. Maar jy wil nie weer werk nie en weet nie wat is hy's fout nie* (He's been here for a long time, about ten years. But now he doesn't want to work anymore and don't what's his fault). Then I'd ask him: 'How could a man work for ten years, being loyal, and suddenly he doesn't want to work? Is there anything that we could look at that may have caused this? Maybe he wasn't happy about something. Then he'd say *Miskien ek weet nie* (Maybe, I don't know). I'd ask him if I could talk to this man alone to find out what the problem was. Sometimes you'd find that the problem was not work related. But it emanated from

outside. The trouble was at home. And when the employee arrived at work he becomes stubborn and didn't want to listen.

TM: So, at Home Trust you met up with Mr Serote and Mr Difa - they were from Tembisa - and you started to organise. How did you start?

DM: Yes, we were starting to organise. That was the beginning of the TCA, you see. We argued that don't have a league or a body that we were going to use when talking to the official authorities to say we want these. Because you as an individual when you get there and say that you want electricity they said "Who are you and what do you want?" But if it was a body and when you got there you just said that you were the TCA, if we don't get it we are going to tell the people not to pay rent anymore. Then they were going to listen to you "No, you can't do that. At least, you know, let's see what we could do. Okay, let's set a date so that we could begin some talks". And we started now. You see, we were organising and doing all these kind of things; and we were attending workshops and meetings. And in those workshops we were teaching people that if ...

TM: You were organising as TCA?

DM: TCA. Yes, under the TCA banner.

TM: Who was leading it?

DM: That was what we were fighting for - fighting for leadership and affiliation. Some were saying 'No, we were supposed to be autonomous and not affiliate into any other thing, you see'. But we knew the ANC's background. We wanted to put it under the ANC. And some didn't agree, saying "If we don't put it under the ANC we wouldn't receive the feedbacks we were getting from Botswana". Because we were getting feedback from Botswana. That's where we got it from; we did that way.

TM: So how does Botswana fit in all this?

DM: Botswana?

TM: Yes, how does it start?

DM: Remember that we were in the TCA but reported to the ANC in Botswana. We were part of the ANC. Now the others [in the TCA] ... Well, we were not telling them to join the ANC. We were saying let's adopt the strategy of the ANC, and use the Freedom Charter, you see. [Because] that said everyone has rights in South African. And everyone has rights as a resident of Tembisa, and so on. They refused, saying "No, no, we don't want to be associated with these things. Some people didn't join this association to ..." we argued 'We can't tell these people to join but we were using the ANC's strategies.

TM: Who was refusing – the leadership?

DM: No. It was not the leadership. It was the other gang that refused. Remember now we had cliques ...

TM: O, within the TCA?

DM: Yes, within the TCA. There was Goba's gang that said *Uyabona labantu basizela nezinto esingazifuni la* (You see, now these people were introducing things that we didn't want in the association). We just want the association to remain TCA. But within the TCA when we discussed we talked politics. In the civic we were talking politics. We were talking about things that could be done in the township and so on. And without using hard political words you'd never achieve those things.

TM: When was TCA formed, if you still remember?

DM: TCA was launched ... Yes, TCA started a long time ago. TCA started in the '70s.

TM: Oh! When you arrived in Tembisa was it already in existence or not?

DM: It was starting, but it was not organised. When we joined it began to be organised. On the day of its launch that was the day we split. One group suggested that we needed to get the main speakers. So, we invited [Terror] Lekota to be the main speaker. I can remember Lekota saying *Hey banna, ke ya Bloemfontein, joale ke tla fihla joang moo?* (Hey, guys I'm going to Bloemfontein and it would be too expensive for me to come there as well). We said 'Don't worry. We'd send money to come here'. We also invited Popo Molefe. Who was the other that came? Quite a few guys came. We launched TCA. And after launching it all the people who were invited to speak spoke about the ANC. And the other groups within the TCA said 'No, we are no longer part of this'. They split, you see. That's how the split start. When we arrived there we were informed that this was not going to work.

TM: In Botswana?

DM: Yes. They said once you split you'd start talking different languages and you were going to confuse the people, the residents. And by then we were about to embark on a rent boycott. Some people were saying *Madoda asibhadeleni irent lokusilwa* (Guys, let's continue paying rent while fighting). They argued that that's what the leadership suggested. Others were saying *O yifepa joang kanqe ya holoma* (How can you feed a dog while it's biting you?). Don't feed it. So, don't pay. Well, others were arguing that if we don't pay the township would collapse. We said let it collapse. That's when we started to split.

TM: How do you split?

DM: There were two groups

TM: Who were in the other group?

DM: That was Goba's group.

TM: Oh, ubab' Goba Ndlovu?

DM: Yes. And in the other g it was us: Serote, Greg. Do you know Greg?

TM: Greg Thulare, I know him.

DM: Not Greg Thulare, but his father. He (Greg) was still a young boy...

TM: Malebo?

DM: Malebo . We were with them. We were also with Amon Msane, Ngobese, you see. This guy used to ... He was working for Ransack Roux. And some of them I've forgotten them. It was a big group.

TM: What did you call yourselves?

DM: We called ourselves TCA

TM: And the other group?

DM: They called themselves TCA. That's what confused the people. The only thing that we were doing was to hire halls ... Actually, we didn't hire them. We used to get them for free. We would tell the owner we were TCA and wanted to use the hall and the owner would gladly agree. We invited religious ministers to come and pray. But we were mostly using the ANC's strategies.

MT: So, who was the link between yourselves and Botswana - who went to Botswana to meet the leadership there?

DM: We were the ones going there. In most cases we used Rob (Robert Serote) because his cousin brother was in the top leadership. You know, Wally [Serote] was in the top leadership there. He was a respected person and a Commander. So, we'd travel to Botswana. We were also supposed to recruit people and take them to Botswana.

TM: Do you still remember your first trip when you went there?

DM: Yes, I do remember it. My first trip there ... There was a wedding from Alex and almost everybody was going there. When we arrived at the border gate we said *Ons gaan by die bruilof* (We're going to a wedding). Then we started to dance and move in a 'step'. And the police asked *Wies die bruilof? Al die mense van Suid Afrika gaan by die bruilof* (Are all these people from South Africa going to a wedding?). We entered into Botswana. The second trip involved cows.

TM: Which cows?

DM: The ones we were talking about.

TM: What happened to them?

DM: You see, when you moved from that side ... You see, a border it like this street. On the one side is South Africa and the other side is Botswana. So, there were many people on the side of Botswana who were herding cows, and bringing them to South Africa.

TM: Oh, from Botswana?

DM: Yes. They wore scarfs that reached their knees. So, when you wanted to cross into Botswana you had bring a scarf along and tie yourself with, and pretended to be herding the cows.

TM: So, that's how you entered into Botswana?

DM: Yes, that's how we entered. But if the Botswana police see they were going to arrest you. So, we'd make arrangements and when we arrived someone would come to pick us up and take us to the spot. We'd stay in that house. They'd give us information and guide us.

TM: Who were you meeting that side?

DM: We were meeting the ANC's commanders and junior commanders like Thami Mnyele. He was one of those guys we were with. People like Wally Serote.

TM: What did you discuss when you were sitting with them?

DM: They wanted a report, to explain what was happening. We'd give them the report and inform them about the situation. Then they'd guide us, saying you shouldn't do like this. This was how you need to conduct yourselves. The people who were negative this was how you should handle them.

TM: How were you supposed to deal with them, according to them?

DM: They said we had deal with them so that at least they should be able to understand what was happening. But if they didn't want to understand avoid them and go forward; recruit residents so that they could understand what you wanted to happen, you see. Things like that.

TM: So, you'd come back

DM: Yes, we'd come back.

TM: What was the strategy now?

DM: The strategy was that we should call people again to the meetings. We didn't tell anyone that we were from Botswana. You can't tell people that. They'd say *Hoo, kanti ningama Commanisi* (Wow, are you communists?). So, we'd say to the people 'We now need to investigate how many people in the township were paying rent. Now we want you to do that. You must investigate if your neighbour was paying or not'. They'd ask *Hey man, ke tla bona joang?* (Hey man, how would I know if he was paying or not?) We'd say it's easy. You'd see with the lights. But then others started to switch off all the lights in the house and leave the stove on (laughs). They were using candles to light the house. By then many people didn't have televisions.

TM: What did you suggest they do when they found that lights were on in certain houses?

DM: Well, the young guys we were with would beat people up, or bomb your house of which when we arrived in Botswana we were told to discourage because it was not a solution. They said if you do that that means you were fighting against each other. Then you couldn't defeat the enemy. You've got to come together and be united so that you could hit the enemy. But when you're fighting against amongst yourselves the enemy rejoices.

TM: What was the reason for you to call for a rent boycott – was the rent expensive?

DM: No, we were paying but there were no improvements in Tembisa. There was tarred road; there was no electricity. Only selected people had electricity; people who were employed there were not from Tembisa. We didn't know them. And all the senior positions were occupied by whites only.

TM: In the Municipality?

DM: Yes. The Superintendent's positions were for them. And a black person was a position of senior clerk. But you'd find that the black employee was then one doing all the job. And white employee arrives and doesn't know anything – he had only Standard 8 and the black employee had a matric – but the white employee would be a senior to the black employee just because was white. Those were some of the things we were fighting against. Transport ... We didn't have transport. Taxis were using one route. Then we'd ask what would happen to people who lived in other sections; how would they access these taxis? People used to get wet in the rain walking from one section to the one used by taxis. We wanted more people to be given permits to operate taxis. The other issue was about houses. For example, if you wanted to wall your house you had to get permission. You couldn't just wall it. You had to go there and apply for permission. Then they'd ask you how were you going to do it and so on? If you wanted to extend it, they'd refuse. So, we were fighting ... Because people had been paying for these houses for a long time why couldn't they give them out for free or tell the people how much they were worth. So, they they started targeting us.

TM: Who was targeting you?

DM: The government, using the local police. You see, when had identified you they'd come at night to arrest you. Sometimes they'd go to your workplace and tell your employers that you can't employ this guy. He is a communist. Then you'd lose your job

TM: In your case what happened?

DM: In my case ... I don't know. I can't say. I was clever. Things just went automatically, because in my company they liked and the people there liked me. And when I was waiting for that time and date to come it never came. It never came until things changed. Rob came to tell me that he was leaving [the country]. I said 'Okay, go'. He suggested that we leave together. I refused because my dad was very sick. He left.

TM: Was he telling you leave South Africa?

DM: Yes. And he left. And then he came back. He recruited quite a number of young people. I didn't go. And when I left for the States my focus shifted a bit from the struggle.

TM: When did go to Philadelphia?

DM: It was '89.

TM: The TCA split how was it ever resolved?

DM: It was never resolved. And then TCA died a natural death. I was then very busy ... You know, when you work I didn't have time to go there ... Besides I was also busy with my studies, Then the TRA (Tembisa Residence Association) was born. It was similar to the (the TCA). They had only changed the name. At times I would go there. There was a guy, Ali Tleane.

TM: Oh, I heard about him

DM: Yes, he was the leader there



TM: Of the TRA

DM: Yes, of the TRA. , I used to go there and talk to him. Because by then we were trying to enter ... Then we were pushing the struggle in the firms. People were not offered positions and junior managers. So, we'd go from one school to the other enticing young boys to learn, because we were recruiting boys who were from universities. You see, for instance, in pharmaceutical companies pharmacist were white people. So, we had to force them to black pharmacists. We'd do career guidance. You couldn't go there and tell people to come to your firm and not having a black supervisor and a black junior manager. So, we were fighting for those kind of things. When we arrived there we'd bring this young people from universities who have been employed by our company: this is the guy recently employed by our company and he's in this position. If you follow this route ... You could try. You didn't have to place them in your company but in quite a number of companies that could employ them.

TM: Which companies were working with?

DM: No. We were doing it for ourself.

TM: Oh, as members of ...

DM: Yes. We worked like that. We'd go to all these companies to encourage them to promote people; people must not just sit. Because you'd find a person sitting there and they'd say he was a clerk. And when you take a look you'd find that this person knew this job better than the manager. Because by then there were [black] people who had masters [degrees] in the firms.

TM: But did that strategy help?

DM: Yes, it did. Then I joined BMF

TM: Black Management Forum

DM: Yes, BMF. And then we had to write letters to companies. We had to offer assistance to companies to give us a certain number of people and we'd consult Technicons, at least, so that you could be noticed. But the company had to pay for the development of these people.

TM: After TRA was established what happened to the members who were following Mr Goba Ndlovu?

DM: Some fell out. Others joined the TRA because he was no longer there. We had also left. There were new members. Within the TRA many were arrested.

TM: During the rent boycott there was some development. For example, places like Hospital View were established. And these were bond houses. How did you involve them in the rent boycott?

DM: Eh, yes it's a very good question that you are asking. It was very difficult, because you had to chose what you were doing. It's either you chose that you wanted your family to be better off or you wanted it to remain with the masses. Like, for instance, you wouldn't tell people that tomorrow it was rent boycott and suddenly they see you living at Hospital View. They were going to say this guy

was playing around. So, where I was, people insisted that I don't move; stay there. We'd see what we do.

TM: At Mfihlweni?

DM: Yes. But deep down in me I realised ... You see, people were under the impression that, eh, change would come. Of course we knew that change would come. But then they thought that when change had come they'd get houses in town. You know, they'd chase white people out of their houses: 'Hey, take your family and get out of this house. Go'.

TM: Oh, that's how people thought?

DM: But deep down I knew that if there was anything that you wanted you'd have to work for it. So I relocated and moved to this area. And when I arrived people were saying come on lead us. We understand that where you come from you used to organise. I'd go to the meetings but not contribute. I'd just to observe and then leave.

TM: Why was it like that?

DM: It was because I had left people that side.

TM: Did you feel that you were not in the same level?

DM: Yes, we were not in the same level. Do you know what people used to say? *Le tloga kwa leseke la resenyetsa mo. Re agile. O seke wa mpoela gore wena o tshwana lenna. Ga re tshwani* (Please don't come and cause trouble. We've built houses here. And don't think we're in the same level, because we're not).

TM: (Laughs)

DM: Yes some people say that, even you know at one time the time I opened the super market people would say to you, we dont want to but to you, you take our money here at Mashemong no

TM: Mmm!

DM: Yes, some people wee saying that. I can still remember after I had opened my supermarket people would say *Hare batli ho reka mo wena. Bare wena o dula kwa. Yanong o batla ho tlonka chelete yaka moMashemong* (We don't want to buy in your supermarket. I heard that you've bought a house in Hospital View and now you want to take our in Mashemong). I think [the apartheid system] had internalised itself in people. So, I was forced to shift and focus on my life in this area.

TM: Did many people in the leadership of the TRA move to this area or it was just a few individuals?

DM: I was individuals. After some time Ali Tleane was also arrested. TRA gradually died. Because people were afraid, saying if joined TRA you were going to be arrested. And there this issue that if were arrested for such issues they repossess your house. Because they'd argue that you were not supposed to live because you were filling people with bad ideas. So, many people became scared: If you join TRA they are going to repossess your house and where are you going to stay? But we had very strong follows in the TCA. All these young boys joined us. Hence, you could see how the

situation was in '76 (Actually it's in the mid-1980s). When there was a funeral, eish! Many of these boys would be there running around. An order was issued that all the police stations ... Police issued a statement that no one was allowed to carry a coffin in their shoulders. It was supposed to be transported by a car.

TM: Oh, they didn't allow people to carry it?

DM: Yes, because they argued that we were turning that dead comrade into a hero. Therefore, we were stirring a fight. Later they changed again and said only the family was permitted to go to the cemetery for the burial. The rest of the people were forbidden.

TM: Where did this order comes from?

DM: The order came from the police. It didn't last, because you can't stop young people. The family could go to bury their loved one but when they return young people would betoyi-toying. Or the police would arrive and intimidate the young people. The next thing these boys would be throwing stones and all that. Then the police would shoot them. The other thing that these young people did was whenever they suspected you but didn't know exactly what your activity was, they'd beat you. I mean, they'd see you everyday carrying a briefcase walking around, they'd suspect that you were a State agent. Only to find you were not an agent, but maybe you were a student. So, every now and then you had to introduce yourself to these young people: 'Hey, gents I'm student studying at Wits. I'm doing this and that. I'll try to attend some of your meetings'. If they didn't know you they'd come to your home to beat you. And then the whole family would be beaten.

TM: When you launched the TRA were you elected to any leadership position?

DM: Yes, we had positions. But it wasn't the kind of positions where they said this what you were supposed to do. It was I can call a delegation.

TM: Like how, if you can explain to me?

DM: Like saying you were going to be our transport manager; you were going to be the organiser for this particular section; and then you everything that we do at least you could share the responsibility. But we rotated the sharing responsibility to give other people a chance. And we teach those who didn't know. And then we'd say to other you'd be a scout or you'd ... What do they call this? Maybe you'd contact our acquaintances who were the best speakers, so that we could invite them when we needed them. We wanted someone who could talk just like Lekota, you see. When he spoke you could tell that a leader was speaking and knew what he was speaking about.

TM: Where did you hold TRA's meetings?

DM: Mass meetings?

TM: No, leadership

DM: Oh, we used to hold them at my place. We'd take a newspaper and placed it on the window and close all the windows and it would be dark in the house, then we'd light a candle and read what we

were talking about. Sometimes we would go to Serote's place. At times we'd be at Mashemong in other people's houses.

TM: But weren't you scared?

DM: We were scared, but what else could we do? Otherwise we wouldn't hold meetings. So, we had to meet.

TM: When you joined did you already had a wife?

DM: Yes, I was living with her and my children.

TM: How did they feel about what was happening?

DM: She'd say what you're doing would put us into trouble. And at one time they'd say we better leave you alone. The kids would go to sleep. And remember when these guys were about to leave – there were no cars outside. They had walked to my place. Because if there were many cars outside my house the police would come in to see what was happening inside. So, I used my car to transport these guys back to their places. After the meeting I'd take three of our members and drive them to their places. Then I'd come back to take another three, and so on until I had taken all back to their places.

TM: So, 1990 political parties were unbanned ...

DM: Yes, they were unbanned. By then I was running my Supermarket.

TM: And politics ...

DM: I had then taken a very low profile. Even when they called me, saying 'Masina was coming'. When I get there I'd just endorsed their decisions. Then they'd ask 'What's bothering you?' I'd say 'There was nothing bothering me. I was just tired. It's time you did this things you young boys'. It was even much better then because all the political organisations had been unbanned. They were now allowed to say anything. I remember during our time at school people would say *Wena o tlo tshwarwa ka mantswe o abolellang* (You'd be arrested for the things you're saying). Because at one time I said "The government of the day". A certain old man looked at me and said 'What did you say?' And another one said 'Do you know I'm a policeman and I can arrest you now – government of the day!' I then said to him I understand you're doing your work – the government used to send black policemen to monitor our meetings, wearing private clothes – but between you and I you know that this government won't stay in power forever . One day it would be ousted'. Then he said you should be careful; don't talk like that. You would end up in trouble. I said 'Ja, well I said that but the fact was that a new government would take over'. Even in America they'd say to me 'South Africa would remain like this' And I'd say 'Do you know what, I believe that South Africa would be free one day'. Then they'd ask when? And I'd say I don't know but that day was coming. It won't be after 100 years. But soon we'd be free. And they'd say no you're dreaming. I'd respond 'No, I'm not dreaming. If at all Mandela doesn't die in prison, Mandela would be free one day'. They'd laugh, you see. When I returned to South Africa, not very long, we informed that Mandela would be released. I wish I could've gone back and asked them: 'what did I say to you?' Because there's no government that rules forever. Just look at what's happening in the Middle-East. Those people were

loyal. You know, Muslims are very loyal people. There you couldn't even say no to what the government was doing. You'd have to follow all the time. And you'd have people in power for 30 years. In that case, you don't even dream that one day I'll lose power. But it's happening.

TM: Yes, it's happening.

DM: Do you see that. And now we're hearing our respected president saying the ANC will rule until Jesus comes. That won't happen. It's just a dream, you know. One day it will change, you see.

TM: But, in conclusion, at some point there was that sad period of violence, especially between the hostel dwellers and township residents, or the ANC and IFP, starting in KwaZulu-Natal, then spreading to the East Rand, and even here in Tembisa. What do you remember about that time?

DM: It was hard by then, because these people as hostel dwellers didn't want to join us. I mean, some of them would say *Hey, angikwazi ukuzofela la. Abantwana bami ngibashiye le. Ngize la ukuzosebenzela abantwana bam'*. *Angifuni ukungena izonto ezenzeka la etownship* (Hey, I'm not here to be killed here. I've left my children back at home. I'm here to work for my children. I don't want to be involved in the township issues) – all I want is my bed and work to be paid. Well, we'd insist 'No, you must join us, because you're part of us'. Then it became ugly after the issue turned into a fight between AmaXhosa and AmaZulu. They fought and stabbed each other. The fight escalated until other ethnic joined in.

TM: Joining in? In which side?

DM: AmaNdebele would join AmaZulu. But some would join AmaXhosa. And people died for that. [This continued] until the police became involved and took sides. After that so many people died. Because these people would come and shoot the residents, and the police would just take a low profile. Or they would not intervene at all. But when the residents attacked the police would shoot them.

TM: As the leadership then of the Civic association, is there any intervention you made?

DM: No there was no intervention by then from us in the civic, because by then things were in a different way. Then, when these things were happening, political organisations were there, so we as associations we had to join one of these political organisations. You had to decide where did you fall: IFP or ANC or PAC? Because by then the PAC worked closely with the ANC. It was like that. So civics like the TCA I don't think they stood a chance of making an intervention.

TM: Since you joined the civic structures and engaging the government of the day then, trying to improve people's living conditions, do you think there were changes that happened?

DM: Yes, there were changes. Because there were quite a few things, like pay points. Do you know at one time we had only one pay point? Pay point change, where you'd go and queue in the very same township. They created other pay points in other areas and people would go there to pay.

TM: At these pay points were they paying for services?

DM: Yes, for services. And then at some point they said they were going to establish a Master Plan, whereby everyone would be entitled to electricity in their homes. Then started this ... What do you

call it? Socket system? What was it called? No, I don't have the correct word. Whereby they started to dig for sewage here. We had a bucket system. You can imagine on Sunday, round about 12 o'clock, when you're busy eating in your table and these people would come running taking the buckets. And while they're taking these buckets out some of these guys would be drunk. If at all you're cheeky they'd just spill it in front of your gate or inside your yard. And during funerals, you can imagine whereby you had more than 500 or 200 people attending the funeral what do you do. You had to go and bribe the guys who taking out the buckets. Their offices were at Ethafeni. You'd have to go there and request them to lend you 10 buckets. The following day you'd have to dig a hole in your yard and spill the buckets in there, because they'd be full. The same thing applied when you had a wedding. So, they started installing the pipes for sewerage. But people had to pay for that. I can't remember how we had to pay for that sewerage plan. But there was a fee that we paid. Even with the Master Plan there was a fee that we paid. When they came to install the cables they'd say it doesn't come cheap, or it's not for nothing; you have to pay.

Then main roads – tarred - were constructed. On top of that they said they didn't an unofficial organisation like TCA. Then we had the council system, where they filled the positions with their own people. Of course many people were not pleased about that. These people were not elected by the people. But they gave the positions and they were the ones who would speak for the people. Instead of having the residents electing their own people. Then in schools. Like I said it was one secondary ... no, there were two: Boitumelong Secondary School and Tembisa Secondary School, By which is known today as Tembisa High School. By then, I think the people of Tembisa were estimated to be about half a million and there were two schools. I was involved in a committee that used to sit and talk about schools and education here in Tembisa. They promised us quite a number of schools. Then we had Masisebenze, thuto-Ke-Matla, Bokamoso. There was one hard Afrikaner guy who was called Dr Pretorius. He was in charge of ... Yes, he promised us those schools. No, no, it's not even three schools. It was Bokamoso, Masisebenze, Thuto-Ke-Matla, Masiqhakaze. Yes, those five schools. So, we got those five schools. They eased the congestion that was there. But still they said they could provide so many teachers. They said if the number of students exceeded the number of teachers, the parents would have to pay for more teachers out of their own pockets. So, we had to fight that until they said everybody who was employed at a school had to be paid by the government, because parents couldn't afford to pay that money.

TM: Mmm ... you have come a long way.

DM: Yes, we were fighting. But nevertheless ... You know, it's not very easy. Or let me just put it this way. You can't achieve anything. But some of the things that we wanted to achieve we achieved – a few of them. For example, schools were built, electricity was provided, quite a number of people were given taxi permits to operate in the township and so on. Because by then they were building the council ... What was it called? They called Masipala (municipality). The municipality was responsible for handing out the certificates. Taxi operators would hire that certificate from the council and operate. But you didn't have your own certificate. Any they could come and tell you to bring their certificate back. So, people were given certificates to operate. And shops, you see. You know, most of the shops here belonged to the council, because it said people had no right to build a shop. 'If you want to build a shop you must go to Qwaqwa or KZN. Just like the houses we were staying in they were called rented houses – a municipality's rented house. Because they said a black man you didn't have a right to be in an urban area. If you want to own something you must go to

your homeland. But things changed. At school, like I was saying, most of the ... Look at their curriculum how it was structured. You wouldn't decide which subjects you wanted to follow. They used to tell you this is what you needed to do and so on. But now there are technical colleges. There were no technical colleges or technical schools in the black townships. Now we have them. Just you you wouldn't go to Wits. They were going to tell you that you were not allowed at Wits. You must go to eNgoye or Turfloop.

TM: Yes, those were meant for blacks students.

DM: Yes, for blacks. This is why I always say those who have the opportunity you can follow any career as long as you are prepared to work hard and your symbols allow you to do that. You can imagine them when you've passed with a university entrance but they tell you to go and take a course in ministry.

TM: Because there where no other...

DM: Yes. But this person didn't say he wanted to do ministry. They say take ministry. And when you get there you just do a mess. Because it's not your course

TM: Bab' Masina, let's leave it here. We thank you so much. At least we were able to cover a lot.

DM: What time is it?

TM: Half past two

DM: Oh, half past two now. What time did we start?

TM: We took one hour fifty minutes

DM: Nearly two hours?

TM: Yes, nearly two hours.



-----End of Interview-----