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Dale: Okay it is the 19th of March 2010 and I am interviewing Mondli Hlatshwayo. Mondli thanks very much. First of all before we start with questions about the APF, just a little bit about yourself because we want to know a little bit about the activists that made up the APF - just tell us where and when were you born?

Mondli: July 13, 1971, Ladysmith, that is in KZN.

Dale: Okay and places since then that you have lived?

Mondli: Okay look I did my primary schooling there and then I left for boarding school education which was in Pietermaritzburg in a place called Edendale. Right, I guess I mean that is where I really became to be conscious politically, you know. I think it had to do with the environment there and at that time there was a relatively strong UDF in Edendale and then also there was this violence between the Inkatha and UDF at that time and then one became to be politically conscious, but not active, I don't want to lie and say I was active like you know some people do, I was not active but I was conscious of participating in the marches and protests and all that kind of stuff. But I was not like, I wouldn't regard myself like someone who was part of the leadership core. Then look, after that I matriculated so my education was what is called technical education which includes like electrical work, mathematics and all that kind of stuff, I was meant to then go and be some kind of a tradesman or something, but then after matric I didn't have money for furthering my studies so I had to stay for about two years looking for a job and then at that time I went back to Ladysmith. I came to Johannesburg and I couldn't find work and at that time again there was still violence here in Johannesburg between Inkatha and the ANC because the ANC was unbanned in 1990. Because of that so, I mean I had to use the trades because I was unemployed. I remember one day I had to walk from Park Station to Newclare Station which is also now Sophiatown because my aunt was working there, mean basically you are walking, right and there was no food so I mean I had to go there just for some food so it was tough I must say but I guess those are the conditions under which working class people had to live. But then I, I couldn't get a job and then I went back to Ladysmith to my moms' place, then I got a job there in a factory. So the conditions were tough again there, no breaks, you just had to struggle and maintain yourself and you can't go for lunch, no you do go for lunch but its like very constrained, you know you can't just go out of the factory, you have to have your lunch there. But then I shifted to another job there which was working in a shop as a general worker, even there you know the conditions were despotic, you know but that was around '93 and then I had some discussions with fellow workers and said you know we need to form a union, you know and start fighting for our rights. And it was hard because we've convinced only fourteen and there were three stores belonging to the same company, you would think that we have convinced all of them and left there they would change their mind

and it was a struggle and an interesting one until our union got some recognition. It was SACCAWU and we worked there and one started now to claim leadership role as a shop steward then you would attend meetings, you know, you would also take part in third party alliance meetings and so you would also take part in the local ANC, so now one is beginning to play that kind of a leadership role. But then again there were difficulties, I think you know even at that time unions were also understaffed like SACCAWU and all those things, but look you know we were struggling, but then again look even in the ANC there was not much political discussions, you know. So actually when I was in Johannesburg, I met some people from, it was called ISSA from that time, it is now Keep Left, so I met them and then I got their publications, so they took my address so at that time I was still reading the literature and getting more excited about this new idea.

Dale: And just tell us what ISSA stands for?

Mondli: It was the International Socialists of South Africa, which is was now after so many years but it remained as Keep Left, but it linked to SWP which is the Socialist Party in Britain. So, one read their literature, I think they also had a Marxist school, but I couldn't attend because I actually didn't have money but I continued to be interested in that kind of left literature. But then again luckily my mom got a disability grant and I was working at that time, like I told you in this job and it is so interesting, when I went back home now, my mom still kept my, there was a small suitcase which had all this deposit slips, I think I was probably earning eighty bucks a week and I was depositing sixty bucks a week, so she still has all those slips and in fact they were kept in a small exercise book, so would like come home and put some bostik to paste them right so I kept them like that. So what we then did, I think my mom and I, I think my mom must have given me around three thousand rand, I must have saved close to two thousand, something like that and then we combined this money and I had already applied at UWC, the University of the Western Cape. So there I went to the varsity then I studied there, you know varsity life has got its own ups and downs, but there unfortunately I had registered and all my fees were paid because of bursaries and now on my first day I was part of a protest there, students were getting excluded there on financial grounds, so we were protesting and I began part of a student movement then. But then I was more, I got more, naturally I should have joined SASCO, but then I finally met Eddie's group, Eddie Copeland, Benny, Margaret, Benny's sister, who was quite active at that time in fact she was, ja she was busy with their media and you know left wing politics, which is largely sometimes about breaking important people down and making them look useless, but she left because in our group also with sometimes all this tension and all that. A lot of good comrades left and it was not because they were sell outs and treacherous and all of that just because of that. So when I was active then I got involved with as I have said with Benny and them and they were quite influential there, I mean they had control of the SRC

and a number of the committees, they could do that because of their anti corruption employment politics but also as well an attempt at building a radical politics on campus. I think the advantage there also was that there was a reading culture; we would read communist manifesto you know all these things, you know learning to write, entry sources of writing components of Marxism, we would read you know like all these things that you read when you start in left wing groups, so that was quite exciting. We would go for debates and discussions and at the same time you were also involved in practical struggles, which was important you know. But then after that I graduated and got my first degree, I did the second one, I also graduated. I debated that time about debating whether I must continue doing my stuff or just going to look for a job. Then I thought okay, I will look for a job, because my family situation they have been carrying me for a long period time of course, they didn't pressurise me, but I mean morally I just said look I must look for a job or something. Then I came to work for Khanya, I mean it was tough initially because I was coming in as a student so you know there were difficulties you know at some point I wanted to leave, it was also the culture and support for new comrades who were just coming was not okay. But anyway I stayed for ten years, but again I think there are a lot of things which one learnt from there. I mean you know although there were difficulties but I think in terms of the work ethic one was able to get a lot of training in terms of writing, presentation of ideas but also reading, you know so one was able to gain a lot of ideas and then I left and after leaving then I came to academia so here I am now.

Dale: And here you are now. Just your family, are you married, do you have children?

Mondli: Ja, I am married I've got two kids.

Dale: How old are they?

Mondli: One is two the other one is seven.

Dale: You have already covered another question which was how you became an activist and politicised, but tell me a little bit about why you got specifically interested in privatisation issues?

Mondli: Look as part of a broader struggle against capitalism you know, one felt that privatisation was beginning to be an aggressive neo liberal policy, you know like as you see it with regard to electricity, you know the cut offs, lack of access to water, housing, you know the crisis, which is also a privatisation issue because you see the state is not building houses for people even when it does that the conditions are terrible. So it was partly of a struggle against capitalism and I think it was a way of framing the issues, off course you know not everything can be reduced to privatisation, but I think it was also more about the fact that the

communities at that time and the unions like SAMWU and the students at Wits were beginning to profile it as a issue and also you must remember there was a long period where the left wing had been head butted in the unions you know, even in the ANC and all other organisations, so the left was like you know, I remember there was this organisation called, what was it called, was it, it was a campaign against neo liberalism.

Dale: CANSA.

Mondli: When I was in, I think I must have been in - I was in Cape Town, ja I was in Cape Town - when I heard about this thing I was ... this is something happening now, you know and yet you know it was a small thing but this idea and also this publication which was published by Patrick Bond and them, Debate. For me, I mean those were important publications because if you look at it before that I thought of nothing, but also I attended some of the meetings of SACP Johannesburg Central, you know like there in Hillbrow, where you spoke, where Trevor spoke and another person from SAMWU also spoke, so one was getting energised by that.

Dale: Okay and I am assuming that that kind of introduction led you ... tell us how you first became involved in the formation of the APF?

Mondli: The formation of the APF, at that time I was at Khanya, right and I remember there was a Wits conference on urban planning which was disrupted. I think people may see that as the landmark in terms of the formation of the APF. I didn't go there but I was at the launch in September which was also captured by the TV cameras you know, so I was there, Roger Ronnie was there so you know I can say you know formally that is how I came in.

Dale: Okay so pretty much right from the beginning, right?

Mondli: Right.

Dale: And who do you remember from that time, the different groups who formed the APF, who came together to form the APF?

Mondli: Look the APF at that time was largely led by left wing groupings and intellectuals, right and I remember Wisemans' group was there, there was also Keep Left there was also comrades from the SACP, Nic and them. Look I mean ja, then there was also students from Wits and the Left Wing and Rehad Desai, you know who used to come to the Monday meetings and then there were also people like Nina, John who came from the WSSA Home Group. It was more like the convergence of various groups and there were debates about you know the role of these groups versus you know community structures and you know at that time the most vocal of these structures there was the Soweto Electricity Crises Committee which was led by Virginia.

Initially Virginia was quite prominent and then there was Trevor and his group, so it was more like a convergence of the left which was lovely coming out of the congress, ja tradition because almost it was up to APDUSA which was not from congress but I mean we all knew each other. So we knew this one and this one, right, but then I think there was a debate about whether, I mean there was tempting because some of these groups were calling for a party, whether you call it the Mass Workers Party or Vanguard Party or political party or whatever but they wanted a party, but I think some of these groups were much more sophisticated than that, they said 'yes okay fine the party we can have it' but I think the central issue now is to organise people and then create a left wing project, I mean build a revolutionary force from below with less of a teleological approach - which is this thing must be like this and that thing must be like that, let the situation be more fluid and let's see how we respond to that. And then also there was an issue about the controlling and power of these groups and that Monday meeting was a killer because I remember we were discussing the National Exploratory Workshop and comrade Florencia was there also, we used to have a big fight with the other comrades there because they wanted it to be the party and we said no comrades, we can't do that. I think at that time there was Kathorus and SECC in the communities, but then I think the idea of giving the community structures more power was quite good because we then started formalising things, but not in a formalistic fashion, but there was no structure then, there was these you know Coordinating Committee, there was the Office Bearers, but again it was very interesting because one group which I thought was going to hijack the organisation was fighting the APF over this thing of not having Office Bearers and the president and the like. But I think our approach was not so foolish in the sense that we said look let's have a structure but at the same time let us appreciate the fact that we know the conditions are fluid, and then at that time the groups had to play a more supportive than a leading role. But again I mean the people from the groups would read more, they have got more access to information and knowledge, so they still had a role to play, but I mean they knew, I think even if you look at the representation at that time, I think there was a recognition which was symbolic and also practical that you say look you know it can't be permanent business as usual. Look I would say the groups also did good, but there was also that recognition that you can't have two people meeting Monday night which was not accessible within the communities, you know not deciding for the organisation.

Dale: And, since you were there from the beginning ... what do you remember, would you recall about the sort of founding principles or strategic vision of the APF?

Mondli: Look I think that really evolved, I think in democracy and accountability and then and attempt at fighting corruption not only at the level of government but also at the level of the organisation itself. But I think issues also of solidarity is a principle, but although also beginning

to transcend the racial stereotypes and even the ethnic stereotypes, but I mean trying to build an organisation which has got more of class politics, you know. So that was for me an achievement, of course I think we didn't do much when it comes to think of women emancipation, I think that maybe that had to do with the fact as men tend to dominate and those issues were only beginning to be fore-grounded like now, so I think that was it. I think also we tried to bridge the gap between the former intellectuals and the grassroots intellectual. I think there were a number of comrades who were trained and who were able to articulate of course I think it was the incident of the rape crisis was a setback because those are comrades who have been trained. You see also the other thing we must also not forget to produce a rooted comrade which takes a lot of time, so that is another issue.

Dale: Okay and just in terms how, I'm talking gradually over the first two years, the organisations, the community organisations became more prominent ... how did that reflect in the structure and the way the organisation was structured?

Mondli: Ja ... I think when people were elected in the Office Bearer positions, there was that conscious attempt at making sure that we are not looking at the skills, your ability to articulate issues and we needed to also look at how do we use that as a process of turning other comrades around, from communities - whether that worked or didn't work I think it is another issue. But I think there was a very conscious attempt and two I think in terms of the executive of the committee and the coordinating committee at the annual general meeting there was a very conscious attempt at making sure that there was a representation and a voice from these grassroots structures, you know and sometimes you know people presented as you know this is just interest for formality and intellectual logistics but I mean at the general meeting there was more representation, I mean from the grassroots and then it was not by mistake ... you know people were just very, people were very conscious and also, even in terms of contributions at the meeting, the chairperson who would make sure that the people from the communities are also able to speak.

Dale: And in relation to your own, just tell us a little bit about your own work in the APF initially, where were you involved, what kind of things were you doing?

Mondli: I was involved with ... I was also faced with my own contradiction in the APF, I mean coming from a formal intellectual background with university education that puts you in a contradictory position. You can speak the language but I mean still you do feel that you go after your meeting you go to your place and you have all this enlarged access to this and access to that, you know you are also in a contradictory education right. But I think again our role again is not to be apologetic about that it's to note it but then try and see, I mean how do we build a layer coming from below. Sometimes some people make it appear as if you can speak the

language you come from that so called new culture then are no contradictions and it is not so. But look when I came in my role was to, look I was part of the education subcommittee which meant that we had to organise workshops in the education programme about what is privatisation, what is neo liberalism? And one also did a bit of writing and then I also played a role in the media subcommittee and then I also participated in other meetings but again you do participate but again as earlier on you also recognise the thing is just to be able to make sure one is able to build a layer of that which can be able to articulate the position and maybe after sometime you can play a different role.

Dale: Okay and from your memory, how do you remember the initial response of the ANC, its alliance partners to the formation, of the actual activities in the APF - what was that response and did that impact on the APF?

Mondli: Look I think initially the ANC tried to ignore the APF, I mean you know you they would see these people who are struggling against electricity cut-offs but it is not going to be part of their discourse. Maybe they thought well this will disappear, but I mean that didn't happen and I think what happened then was that the Trevor thing also became a big issue because he was part of the ANC and then he was beginning to challenge the Igoli 2002 so I think the ANC particularly in his area, in Pimville, didn't like that and that is why he was expelled. But I mean again there they will see the thing but I don't know but then I think as the APF tried to occupy the space as it tried to have some kind of a small public profile but also as there was more and more new critique I think Mbeki couldn't ignore it and that is why we have been evicted from the COSATU House. They were thinking and they started saying that you know COSATU must also deal with this and that and you know COSATU almost started formulating the position on movement which I mean was basically an anti-movements position. I think in the SACP also you saw in those days of Igoli 2002, I think there was your disciplinary action but also I mean Claire and them I think they moved out of the SACP in Joburg central, of course others while they were critical but I think there was this beginning of saying this was an organisation which we have to comment on it.

Dale: And during the first two or three years of the APF's existence, there were two particular events that seemed to shape the growth and character of the APF quite a bit, the World Conference against Racism and then the World Summit on Sustainable Development. What are your opinions or perspectives on how exactly the WSSD in the APF was crucial ... how did that shape the APF and allowed it to grow?

Mondli: Look, the thing WCAR was important, I was in Durban then, at that time there were only two communities within the APF which is Kathorus and the SECC, okay the former soldiers were there but they were not a significant form. I think that WSSD was a turning point in the

sense that we were able to mobilise more than twenty thousand people and I think the fact that the ANC couldn't organise, you know their march was also critical in the sense that it was an embarrassment for them. So I think it was another important moment and also I think that even the international organisations for social justice I think they also saw hey look the reason the APF which was I think also that the APF I mean played a fairly important role not only in numbers but it also staffed the SMI, it was critical and it also managed to bring in even LPM and all those organisations. So then I think you know they saw it as a force that is there and it cannot just be ignored so they began now to realise that now look maybe this is something to be looked at, you know.

Dale: Okay and you from that point on with the formation of the SMI after WSSD or through WSSD, you became particularly involved in the SMI. So just tell us, just discuss a little bit how particularly from the APFs' side, that group and the politics around solidarity at that point to build a more national movement?

Mondli: Look after WSSD which was a honeymoon, I think we then realised that we needed to seize the moment from the ground and try and build from the ground, but with a national perspective. There was a debate whether the SMI must be permanent in its structure, I think the APF was wary of that, you know we had a lot of discussions and we said look let's have a very loose coalition and we look at this as more about the sharing of experiences and supporting struggles on the ground. But also even in terms of new perspectives and approach and I think the APF also played an important role, I think that was also recognised even by the other formations, that you know it was the APF. And I think we are able to play that role carefully because I mean at that time we did have a bit of resources and we didn't use that in a big brother approach ... because resources was also not just about money, we were like providing the SMI with bodies which was resources and the time.

Dale: And what impact do you think that that work, that solidarity and building and what happened in the SMI particularly with the other social movements that existed, did that shift the APF in any kind of way in terms of its own perspectives ...?

Mondli: Ja it did a lot because we began to discuss more about Palestine, I mean there was more solidarity with the Palestinians opposing war in Afghanistan, war in Iraq, but also beginning to look at Zimbabwe. I think comrades did a lot of solidarity work sending the comrades to Zimbabwe and we must remember at that time the LPM was pro Mugabe and through the work we were able to undermine Mugabe's support and expose him. But then also I think we were also able to learn more about human rights and environmental issues, with WSSD assisted that because we were able to develop a progressive approach and even like an activist, I mean coming from the ground were a part of it. We learnt also that there were other

people who were also struggling who are like us, not only internationally but also locally with Abahlali. It didn't work because of the parochialism, but we worked with Merafong, we worked with the AIDC in Cape Town again there were problems but I mean no one can accuse us of not trying. So we did a lot of the things and then we attended other seminars in other places and there we interacted with other people and we learnt. So I think it was a learning experience which I think was also generalised, it was not only just about these intellectuals who are learning but it was also other comrades also, of course maybe we could have done more than that but I think something was done there.

Dale: Okay and by the time, let's say 2004/2005, the APF had grown quite substantially - some membership based, many other communities had come on board - it had done a lot of these things you're talking about. What at that time as an activist, as a militant in the APF what did you see as the key sort of ideological and strategic challenges as opposed to the earlier period as things had moved?

Mondli: Look I think the first ideological and strategic challenge was a question of resources in a context of a generalised environment of poverty and unemployment. Some comrades I mean although they came to the struggle because of the problems in their communities. I think they began to see money as something which they must also benefit from individually. So look they are unemployed but at the same time there is a principle here which is anti corruption, accountability and I think that was one of the biggest issues. I remember having comrade Florencia and yourself and I mean there was a struggle against those tendencies right, because you see as sometimes they say you know - 'more money more problems'. Because you see if you get money then there is going to be more issues and this and that and this. So I think another thing also, I think there was also a struggle internally because there were divisions and tiff wars which was not necessary, you know. Just to give an example you know there will be a group from the SECC and groupings from other communities, you know some of the intra left wing factionalism and sectarian politics were beginning to creep ... then I think also, there was also a bit of, which I think was also a problem of the left, there was like I think in my imagination I was beginning to be also limited because we were beginning to say okay fine this is money and this is how we are going to use it, this is how we are going to preserve so I mean that was that kind of being over-difficult. But at the same time I think there were practices, I mean from the previous office bearers and also the organiser, which I think was very problematic which had to be challenged and there was this inward turn, but at the same time I think there were other struggles in Merafong, in Durban and I think in the SMI house they were beginning to say to us look you are not alone.

Dale: And why do you think during that particular time - in what I call middle years of the APF in 2005/2006 - at that time a lot of movements were going through a lot of internal difficulties and problems and splits and things and even the APF did have its problems. In your estimation, why is it that the APF didn't disintegrate but held, at least even in a different state, held together?

Mondli: I think the realisation among the left which is the leading the groups politically that specifically the APF is just going to be another big defeat. So while people had their fights but there was always, I remember there were times when I also felt that maybe we are going to split, but I think, I mean people were able to transcend their immediate interest, I mean for the bigger picture. So there was some kind of strategy on the thinking but I mean there was at the same time there was a realisation that yeah look we have come so far why must we make this another failed left wing project, so that unity and the zeal to try and make some compromise ...

Dale: Okay and I just wanted to ask you a specific question because it is important for the history of the organisation ... what were the specific kinds of educational activities throughout that time that you were involved? What did the APF do to build its cadreship and how did they go about doing that?

Mondli: Okay one, there were discussions on the economy like globalisation, neo liberalism here, you know RDP, ASGISA you know all the macro economic issues, those are like broader political issues. But then even beyond that we had discussions on socialism you know the various issues around bourgeois democracy it's limitations, but then there will be very specific and very concrete issues like electricity, water around these people of our struggle. So there was the combination of that broader political economy there and the immediate issues but then there would be an attempt at creating an interface between the two and there were also practical skills like media skills and writing ...

Dale: Okay and just tell us a little bit about what you remember about the key APF activities during that time, I am talking about public activities.

Mondli: Public activities?

Dale: The things that the APF and its communities engaged in?

Mondli: I mean firstly it was the launch in September and then two; I think it was the WCAR, ja the APF had some presence there and then I think it was also WSSD. But I think it was also the annual general meetings I think they had no profile, they had more like landmarks and then there would also be like protests like for instance WSSD at Wits, you know the things like that. And a lot of things also took place in the communities like for instance there is some struggles

against cut offs you know Operation Khanyisa and then even some funerals. I mean comrade Bongani's funeral it was more of a public profile, the funeral ja. Most of the things were a public profile were more like struggle-related and then you know the Kensington '87 and then of course you know this case of the Coalition against Water Privatisation because there was some link between the two, ja.

Dale: Okay and then from also from doing some media work and other things, how was the APF's actions and it's politics, how was the response of the outlets, the media outlets in the general public, I am not talking about the ANC and the political parties, but generally out there?

Mondli: Look I think depending on an issue, like for instance I remember we had a march of the 21st of March, it was during Human Rights day. I think the media there responded well because I think Human Rights day normally is the ANC thing where they talk but I think we critically engaged in and then we went through to the Constitutional Hill right. Then there was some kind of profile, but I also think that you know it depends on who was speaking to whom on behalf of the APF. I think that sometimes there was a problem to over simplification of the issues from some of the people ... but in some cases I would imagine that there would have been sympathy from the public, you know as to what the APF was saying. But I also think that maybe we also didn't do much in terms of, you know sometimes we were relying a lot on the marches and some kind of action, which is fine but I think you know we also have to do something which is quite unique, which will make a mark you know, so we are lacking on that.

Dale: Okay and the same question with regards to what you have experienced in terms of the APF's growth in the communities, how people on the ground - as the APF's profile increased as the actions happened - how people themselves in communities responded to the APF?

Mondli: Look I think it was based on where the communities are affected immediately by the crises, like for instance on Kwa-Masiza, there was a crisis and they were threatened with eviction, so there was like a warm welcome. In other places like for instance, you know in Soweto, those that were affected by the cut offs, you know they respond warmly and they end up joining the organisation and becoming key activists. So it really depended on whether you were affected or not, but I am not saying that there were no people who were driven by solidarity, I think the growth of the organisation was related to its ability to deliver on concrete issues.

Dale: I just want to follow that for a minute because there seems to be a tension between what the critique would be about a movement being purely reactive to immediate circumstances and trying to build a movement that is much deeper and has a cadreship that makes linkages ... in

the APF, do you think there was a good balance in that or that one presided over another or was there always the tension and challenge?

Mondli: No, I think there was like this so called reactive approach always, and we were not able to ... you know sometimes if you are not able to, I think that had to do with loving the politics from the SECC which I think it's important to react, but it is not a sufficient condition for building a movement. I think there was not enough attempt at just making sure that you sustain a cadre, you know through reading, through training through ... because you see also sometimes we don't want to go around manufacturing campaigns because they won't be sustainable, but when there are no campaigns, I think you also have to look at how do you sustain you know a comrade. Of course you can plan a campaign, but if it doesn't have a resonance among the people affected it won't work, so there was not you know like a strategy of like saying okay, I mean comrades in this community there are no struggles, so maybe lets form a club, maybe a reading group, maybe a debating forum which may also attract the students in that community. So I think we were not being creative enough, there was always this thing like 'ja look we must respond', for instance if not removing the pre paid meters which is not revolutionary. And then sometimes there was an issue about substitutionalism - you know we would like get a group and substitute for the masses which is based on the fact that there was not an appreciation of the difficulties and the challenge of the period which doesn't mean to say that people must just go and read, I mean you can't make a revolution like that but at the same time you need to preserve your cadre and there are many ways of doing that and I mean we didn't do that. As a result of that I think we also lost a lot of good people who could've stayed, because I mean some people may be interested in Marx, maybe you were able to discuss Marx and they lacked that, they could write a good pamphlet but maybe they don't stay in Soweto so we need to have that holistic approach.

Dale: And in fact there was a related question that I was going to ask you. Why do you think that during that period, 2005/6/7, that the APF did lose quite a lot of its earlier seasoned skilled middle class, whatever you want to call them, cadreship ... they had a core of that and they gradually sort of disappeared?

Mondli: Look firstly there was a very strong anti-intellectual culture coming from the intellectuals of the SECC and the SG in particular ... themselves intellectuals. But I also think also it's the nature of the petty bourgeois class you know it has so many choices ... which is a problem of petty bourgeois individualism, black and white. I mean it is not a race issue that you know it was just whites, even black. They come in they see okay fine, then they fight with this one, fight and afterwards ask themselves you know why must I go through this nonsense, you know I have to put up with so and so, you know I mean for them it is a class issue, that fluidity.

But at the same time I think there was that intellectual ... I mean even myself, if you go to the APF and then you are going to be seen as part of the suburban left, so they must just shut you up, you feel like look you going to speak but then other people who are also themselves petty bourgeois. But then also again that is not an excuse, I think one should stay because there is a bigger picture, I think those could be seen as contributing factors ja, of course there are individual cases, but I think I am just generalising it.

Dale: Most the time, all the time pretty much, you were in the APF and you were working at Khanya College right?

Mondli: Ja, ja.

Dale: Just tell us s little bit about how you think the relationship between the APF and progressive NGO's or institutes like Khanya or others played themselves out because this also became a fairly big point within the APF?

Mondli: ... look there was an anti intellectual current, right and that current within the APF saw institutions like you know, I mean Khanya which helped people from the other currents as you know competitors, so it became more like a turf war, right. Now that I think, undermined you know the struggle but at the same time I mean being at Khanya, I mean puts you in a very powerful position because you are employed and then the organisation has got the resources and now a building so I mean that gives you power. And I think we had a discussion at Khanya about that, there was a discussion about whether can Khanya intervene in the APF and take us as a sign of a particular faction, we said no, in fact we even said look you can't even meet at Khanya with your faction because that would compromise the organisation. Right now I think among the leading APF activists, I think there was also a development of an anti intellectual cult. I remember Patrick and Silumko and Sello you know they wouldn't t like take part in the reading groups so there was that issue, but also I think maybe the way Khanya carried itself deepened those issues. There was a perception that Khanya was acting as the big brother if it intervenes in an imperialistic fashion, so look I mean imperialism and equality, they don't go together. So I think maybe, I think there could have been some kind of reflection I think coming from us as comrades at Khanya, maybe there are things which are not doing okay, but anyway at the same time there was this turf war. So sometimes I think with regard to some of the APF communities which we actually worked with I think we also certainly made mistakes. I think again it's this issue of money and I think we were not able to, we were not able to show the comrades the significance of the politics but also that had to do with the fact that when you actually work in projects, you are working in too many projects and you are not able to consolidate so you working on this project and then those comrades are working for you and

maybe those comrades, so like its became stressful ... so I don't think we also didn't reflect enough on what we did and how we did things, ja.

Dale: Okay I wanted to just pick up something that you mentioned earlier on, which was that you indicated that pretty much throughout at least throughout those years the APF failed to address what would generically be called the gender question and issues of female/male relationships and patriarchy and sexist attitudes and these kinds of things. Just speak a little bit to why you think that was the case or, and without talking about what's happened more recently, but just in terms of the character of the constituency that the APF represents?

Mondli: Ja, I think it was this old socialist way of doing things, when you see you know this struggle in another sense its key, so we need to remove those pre paid meters, we need to reconnect, we need to do this without looking at it from a gender perspective or from a socialist feminist perspective. And then I think we are not able to put women and the gender issue at the centre of our argument because neo liberalism, of course it attacks all of us but I think women are the biggest victims ... so we are not able to grasp that. I think it also had to do with our formative stages you know when we were beginning to say even now I don't think we have answered it, it's impossible because gender is also not an external thing, it is not like okay it is external in the internal it has got that direct, but also it affects us at our homes. So you know maybe sometimes we tend to say no maybe this is the second stage of our revolution so we tended you know to have that stagiest approach even now. Now I think there are attempts that we are trying to deal with that, but I don't think it is a generalised thing and of course you can't impose things – it is a dialogue and engagement.

Dale: Okay a few last questions. You mentioned that one of the key challenges at least in that earlier period was the issue of resources and control and accountability and everything else stemming from the fact that the dominant constituency in the APF is unemployed and therefore that material resources has become an issue; to what extent do you think the issue of social relations posed a challenge to the APF in terms of its own constituency, in other words not simply material issues but whether it was issues of gender or social values and how there was a clash between almost what you would say cultures in some ways within the APF? Did you feel that, did you experience that in terms of the core community constituencies versus maybe some of the intellectuals and others?

Mondli: I think there was. Here again I think the SG and the SECC are a fact. You see sometimes when you sit with people from the township and then you work with them and you respect them and also you learn from them which is also a very important thing and your methodology is a methodology of a dialogue, I think they appreciate what you do. I mean for them you are able to transcend the class barriers, but at the same time they will always know that look this

comrade is having a car, he is having this life ... but they will see you as someone who is able to go there and assist. But I think there was a very conscious and vicious attempt to try and demonise the middle class people who may have had the arguments and disagreements with the SECC and SG and that I think that didn't assist to build solidarity. But I also see that the thing that I also raised was as middle classes we also have to recognise that we are ... our role can be seen to be a transition because we must assist there you know so that people can be able to speak for themselves. But at the same time we may have to play a different role. Look, for instance if there are fifty thousand people nationally who can articulate on their conditions in the township, myself as Mondli maybe I have to say maybe I must take a back seat here and work in a different area because I was struggling, so big and broad. So that is also another issue ... besides all this things I mean class, there is just a very common human element that people would appreciate that look you know so and so is a nice person. I may not like what he said on that day, but you know this is life and you know, he has been there, he has assisted us, yes maybe he is abrupt but he gets our struggle moving, he assists us. So people could see another thing, I mean people are not fools, they know their leaders; they know, you know so and so will assist us, you know what I am saying?

Dale: Okay, just tell us you stopped being part of the APF when? In an active role, let's put it that way?

Mondli: Ja look when I think I was the media officer, I think it was around probably 2008 ... I stopped being active and then the reason why I was at that time was, I was working at Khanya and myself and people there we actually felt that look my work was also going to be about community structures and building them; there was a plan of having a programme with the APF and making sure that I can play a role in that program. We did some things ... there was a thing called organisers course, we did something again I think it was very limited, I think ambitious, you know and I think for me it had to do with the NGO environment. Because you see NGO's, yes you can make an intervention, but I think you must also understand that there is a limit to what you can do. I mean theoretically you just want a mass organisation with its own resources and with its ability to do its own thing, but I mean funding and that poses you know a lot of threats and I don't think, I mean I think within the media we underestimated that.

Dale: Okay. Strengths and weaknesses; if you were to look back and even now even if you haven't been that active even in the last couple of years but still as the APF, what would you identify as the key strengths and weaknesses of the APF or achievements?

Mondli: I think it was the issue of grassroots solidarity, I think that is the strength and creating a community of anti capitalists, you know who were left wing activists ... yes we are not big in numbers, but I think that we managed to achieve that; and then two - we were able to produce

a layer of activists from grassroots; three I think we played an important role in terms of public education about issues of privatisation, GEAR and all those things. So I mean it was a contradiction and then I mean we were also able to lead our struggles and then with the other struggles, internationally Zimbabwe as well as your local struggles. I mean weaknesses; I think we were lacking on the perspective, okay we did things, but I think that needed some critique and further interrogation you know, like for instance particularly electricity disconnections, I think we were not deeply theoretical enough, you know and then I think two - although we were trying to address it later, but I think gender emancipation. And then I think the issues of resources and some activists within the community related to that was a bit of a problem, right And then sectarianism was also another setback and I think the recent case of Silumko, Patra and Sello is another setback. But again what were the strengths was that we were able to quickly respond as an organisation. When history judges us it will consider the fact that we were able to immediately deal with it.

Dale: Okay at the end of every interview I always ask everybody is there something that we have not covered that I have not asked you about in terms of the APF that you would like to add or that you would like to say?

Mondli: I think I have said a lot, I said a mouthful. I think I must say thank you for providing me with this opportunity. You know I think I appreciate it so I was also able to go back and reflect. I saw the questions so I was able to think through them and say okay this is what is going to be discussed. I think it was also a very good exercise.

Dale: Okay thanks Mondli.

Mondli: Pleasure Dale, thanks comrade.