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Interview with Mzwakhe Mbuli

Emphasis in *italics*. Names/words don't know – highlighted. Areas I can't understand (usually max one word): [...]

Michael Drewett [MD]: Mzwakhe, I'd just like to start with your memories of how you first heard about Shifty and how you became involved with Shifty.

Mzwakhe Mbuli [MM]: I remember a clip whereby Lloyd Ross was quoted as saying he was looking for me – I was also looking for him [laughs]. I'm not sure that that should be called a coincidence. And again ...we can sing together but we cannot speak together. I'm trying to answer this question because I think with Lloyd was exposed to me – I'm sure I was performing at Wits, I'm sure he will explain exactly where he spotted me – but he had so much interest in recording me; but – I think under apartheid the other companies would not have touched Mzwakhe Mbuli's works, so – fortunately there was a Shifty Records around which was *relevant* because I would even tell you what people used to say to me – that they regarded Lloyd as a comrade. Or somebody would say 'if a person – a white man – would record Mzwakhe Mbuli under apartheid, it means that white man was relevant – that white man was like Joe Slovo. You know they said big names: that white man was a communist, that man was *dangerous* – OK [laughs] – so you had to look at Lloyd, he was just *harmless*, you know. But there was a reason for me – I've said it in various interviews – why a need to record. For me, the reason was to leave my voice behind because I thought I was about to die; there were a lot of attempts on my life, and – that's precisely – I mean, some – usually it's a trend, it's a norm, people are 'what inspired you?', you know?

You must always quote big artists, they're, 'if it's important, who inspired you?' You must quote Madiba; my situation was different.

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me, [it] was a person who was thinking that the inevitability of death was just staring in my face; and especially I mean if you survive hand grenades I mean – and so – these were not *crackers*, you know? So these guys were serious – and even *how* I was tortured, they were not playing with me. So I'm fortunate even to this day that I'm not terminal, I'm not sick, I mean I'm sure you can see, I look OK. Erm, but the fact is that *no* artist in South Africa, and I'm not talking about those in exile or Hugh Masekela – there is no artist that was tortured like me in South Africa.

That is why, also, I normally say 'I'm not involved in competition', you know when some journalists sometimes in showbiz try to compare? You know, you can – either it's Lionel Messi or Ronaldo – no, in my scenario, say, one was involved in the liberation struggle. So I didn't become famous because I was playing tennis. I became famous through pain; I became famous because I was fighting an unjust system; so – I was even *not* prepared to change names and give Mandela a pseudo name and say 'Manelow' instead of Na Mandela, because, you know, history have people who decided just to even – *distort names* because they were making a statement, but he was still not called Mandela by his name, yet they were saying they were relevant; and others who would be cowards, who would take a guitar and strum some melody and say 'this melody means freedom' – what is that? So they were playing safe politics. It's very interesting that in South Africa, the radicals belonged under Shifty, you know? Because – it's very strange. I mean it means – Shifty itself was supposed to have been banned – I sometimes wonder how did, OK – so, when my music was banned, you know – tortured, suffered, and this, and detained – the question would have been why not detain Lloyd Ross, or attack or bomb Shifty records? I think Lloyd was fortunate because I know of Beyers Naude and other people, they were attacked, I mean, many – even those who refused to be part of the conscription, and the – activists, you know?

But – yah, but instead of dealing with Shifty they dealt with me. My scenario was different than my counter-white fellow artists under Shifty, because I think living in the townships there was always this thing of the security [...] whenever I was detained they would say 'every house we searched we find your cassettes, and it means you are responsible for [in Afrikaans accent?] *public violence*, and most of your music – how come most activists and comrades possess your CD?' You must remember – if you remember the al -

see maybe the reason I was in trouble it's that when the albums were banned, respectively *Change is Pain* and later *Unbroken Spirit*,

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We used COSATU structures to, worker structures to distribute this album; so it means that this was an act of defiance, and the former – president, James Motlatsi said the other day that, well he was priding himself that he used to – he used his office to allow people to sell my music. Now – you know, it's strange, I remember that some people who take these cassettes and – erm – disappear and die and be killed. So; you don't get your money back off these cassettes. So, and others just go – abruptly – go for exile – now.

[pause as someone comes in with tea – 00:06:10; recommences 00:08:10].

Now Mike, if I were to give you a short answer, I decided – I remember that I decided to approach Shifty Records because I thought I was going to die. And the idea was that 'at least let me leave my voice behind,' because people used to say my voice was either 'strong' or 'poetry was strong', or 'voice was beautiful', but 'beautiful' under apartheid, I mean that was like *irony*. Yeah, now that is precisely the reason; I mean the coincidence part of it is that when – as I said, it's like Lloyd was also looking for me. I remember him saying at certain intervals that he was also looking for me, so we were looking for each other. And that was synergy – because – there would not have been a problem – he was looking for me, I was looking for him, yeah.

MD: And then who's idea was it to take your poetry and put it to music, because until that stage you had just been a – a sort of 'people's poet'?

MM: Yeah, it was a project, I think. We realised that for this thing to sell, you needed music, because my – although even today I've maintained all my recordings that till last year – I don't record an album without – solo, raw, you know, tracks without music, yeah – but for it to be sellable, for it to be received abroad, or – beyond the borders of this home town, we needed music, so that is why when Gito Baloi, Simba [Morri] – when Lloyd organised the artist[s] to play, Hilton Schilder, then the idea was to make it, you know, attractive, sellable, you know? I think that was the idea, although – what is, what was said is that after every recording the, you know, the debut album, the second one still, the government just decided just to *ban* them; and [...] another [...] it was banned, followed by harassment, so that was the sad part. Yeah, I'm glad. You know this is tw – [...] celebrating twentieth anniversary. I listened to a number of radio stations this year, they were saying people were talking about *me*, in particular: 'there's one artist or person who never *changed*, who never shivered, who – who was *audacious*, you know, Mzwakhe Mbuli

[Timecode – 00:10:42]

– that despite the harassment, you know, the iron fist, or – brutality of the apartheid police, Mzwakhe never changed his lyrics.’ And when they say it now, you know, Mike, it sounds like ‘Wow! *Is it?*’ So despite that there’s so much happened to me, I would not change; I think one very interesting part is in 1988; my 1988 detention was the worst of them all – erm – I was severely tortured; and I came out, but having been told *never* to write the nonsense again; never to write about – I was even instructed: ‘Go and write about the flowers,’ you know? And erm, ‘what kind of poetry do you have that has Nelson Mandela? I mean this is not poetry’ – these guys would always either say ‘who is behind you?’ when they were strangling me, say ‘who is behind you?’, you know? There was no-one behind me; I had a questioning mind.

But there is one part I won’t forget – when I was about to be released in 1988, this was one scenario: there’s something that I read later that happened to Father Makhatu, Manganiso Makhatu [? 00:12:03], that they took him – because he was a man of the cloth, you know his – the regalia that they dress – he was naked, but they used something like a rat (?), you know, on his private parts; that’s what they did to me in 1988 – they took me to an open veld in Krugersdorp – not far away from the hospital; and erm – I – they, they did – I was obviously; they only [...] blindfolded me when I arrived at the spot; there are shacks on that part, but it’s just five minutes away from the Leratong Hospital; they did that. But I’m mentioning the 1988 experience because after they’ve done so much, there is erm – when I was about to be released, they – that’s where I wrote the poem ‘The Stone’ – ‘a hundred and – what? days, fifty days alone, all and like an animal inside a cage’ – they took me at some stage, that experience – you see it’s one thing to be tortured where you are situated. There’s another form of torture that they did, where you get injuries. They took me – it’s a Main Reef Road that comes to Johannesburg; it’s a long road – it leads to I’m sure Magaliesberg or Northwest ; because I was a Section 29, which is – initially it was Section 6 Terrorism Act – and they changed it to Section 29; so, anybody who was under that charge would be handcuffed at the back – their hands would be at the back and they would put leg irons, or shackles, whatever you call them. Then they – I’m sure after two months or three – they were taking me to a district surgeon for a check-up, a medical check-up; but now, when they took me, they – we sign a form, that is they’re booking out – take this [...] branch police, I’m OK, I’m not having a complaint, you know, I’m fine, but they are going for a routine check. Now, my hands were normal. Now these guys, the handcuffs were tight, you know, they were right; but at the back. Now they put me in the back of the van, and there was a spare wheel there.

[Timecode – 00:14:25]

Now, I – I decided to go towards the window, at the back of this van. Now but – the spare wheel was not stationery; or whether – it was there, but there are many steep, up-down hill on that Main Reef Road. So they would drive and do the emergency stop, you know?, and would continue, not at a robot or a stop sign – they would do that: they would *drive* and *stop*; that was their thing, until we reached Johannesburg. At the district surgeons, my hands, both of them, were

[pause – clearly upset 00:15:16; resumes 00:17:37]

I was saying, when we arrive at the district surgeon, the doctor obviously ordered them to unshackle me; obvious, these guys were always armed. And – I didn't complain; there was no point, but he said 'what happened to your arms?' because both my hands were swollen, swollen, almost the size of my fist, you know?' Then I just explained that I was handcuffed. And so these guys, the way they were driving, I mean it's – because I had to explain how I incurred the injuries that er, yah – the driving, stopping, emergency stop, you know? So, [sigh] then we go; we went back. So. Now, apparently, they were given a form, and the doctor wrote his comments [...], and the driving was different when we were going back – to prison. Then – then they took me in the evening; they went for me in the evening, took me to Protea; the security branch headquarters – main office, notorious in Soweto. They – and they said, yah 'You have made a complaint to the doctor;' 'What complaint?' 'About – *injuries*, [...] you were *injured*.' I didn't understand, I said 'I didn't complain', [they] said 'What happened?' So, now they had to interrogate me, about what did I say, what transpired between me and the doctor. And I said 'no, you said you were taking me for check-up, so he checked me, and nothing else. Where – do you find anywhere in your script or papers or report you have that I, personally, made a complaint? I didn't.' I even said 'take me back to that doctor – I will show you, I will prove, I didn't say anything to that doctor, *he* checked me; and he asked me about my hands, and I said 'I was just handcuffed', now he said 'how can when, you're handcuffed, you have these injuries?' and I explained that the person was driving would stop and drive now – because at some stage I was sitting on top of a – spare wheel; and the spare wheel would just, and would skid and go – towards the door, and you know, I didn't know what to do now, where to sit, because the spare wheel was all over, you know – yah, so.

Now what they said in 1988, when there was time for me to go home; they took me, and then – because remember before I was even taken *in* – there was that interrogation that took place from – 10am [counts].

[Timecode 00:21:00]

I'm sure there were these series of interrogation that took 10 to 10, you know? So – or, 10pm until the next morning – but, but they would do – they would go in shifts; somebody they would sit and talk to me, splash me with water, naked; after three, four, five or six, seven hours then they would go; another group would come in, you know, that means they would knock off, but you know they wanted me to remain standing; this is why they would throw water, because I would stand, and if I wanted to lean on the wall – that's when they would pour me with water; erm, then – but, I want to skip this part – there's this part when I was about to be released: they came to me and said – OK, as you are seated, I stood – and behind me, obvious these guys were always in groups [of] eight, ten – they were always – now, but this time I had to stand in front of this one who was their senior. And behind me there were these other guys. Then they were having newspaper – newspaper, for example, I mean folded like that [demonstrates], then it was, you know, hitting me on the ears – whack! you know – and would continue to do that whilst this one demanded me to concentrate, asking me questions, when I was trying to answer him, these guys would *clap*, you know? Something like – so – yah, so.

And then, then they said to me – this is the answer I give many journalists, abroad in particular, 'Why did you continue, despite all this?' and then, I've always said, 'I continued because of the 1988 experience,' compared to *other* scenarios. The 1988 experience, this guy said to me, whilst I was surrounded, whilst these guys were doing the beatings, said 'you'll be going home, soon, tomorrow; *vandag*, you know? today, or tomorrow; I'm about to release you.' But he said, '*jy moet dankie, sê*' – 'before we release you, '*jy moet dankie, sê*.' Now, I realise, I must say 'thank you'. After all this ordeal, you know? And, er, I refused to say sorry, *dankie* – I refused to say thank you. Now that it precisely why I became *more* stubborn and adamant – that because of this experience, I would *never* say sorry – thank you. Within me I vowed that I would continue. But they made a promise which they fulfilled: they said to me 'this time around' – it was even under state of emergency 1980s that I was arrested, I was detained – but this time they were saying to me, 'if you don't change' [taps table for impact] – or even, now there was a time that they told my mother that 'this time we will show your son'. My mother said, 'if you are God it's fine [...] take his life' – my mother said 'if you are God it's fine'. They said: 'This time around you must change, you must *stop* now – this time we are not making empty threats – you must *stop* this nonsense. We don't want to hear any noise again, this poetry noise, making noise everywhere – you must *stop*.'

I didn't; I came out, I'm sure four days later I was at Wits.

[Timecode – 00:24:43]

Erm – I don't want to say 'the rest is history'; my home was attacked with hand grenades. And even before an ambulance, before anybody could come, after the blast, it was attacked on both sides, F1 hand grenades, the security branch, those who detained me – those are the ones who were dealing with me – those are the ones who came first at my place. Now, I'm saying to you they kept their promise, that they were going to *show me now*. And then I realised they meant it. After that experience – in fact, no, even before – before the blast. You see what they did – I was released somewhere in August, July – late July/August; and three months later I was again in for questioning. This time I was called in, I was not detained – because they were saying, 'we know you are applying for a passport.' And who is behind you, why do you want to go overseas?' They were saying, you see? We are in charge, we know you have applied for a passport.'

Then they showed me the forms that I had filled in at the Home Office. Then I realised, no, they are really running the show. Erm, they were saying 'yeah we know, there is an anti-apartheid conference, writers' conference, this, these guys, they need you abroad, we know who's inviting you' – they will tell me all these things – communists, ANC, everybody's behind this thing. then they want to go and tarnish the image of South Africa abroad.

Then they warned me again – that 'when were you released, it took a week – you're making noise again'; no, that's when they [...]; now, we will show you.' Ah, they did. Ah, they did, my home was under attack. So – I – even after the hand grenade attack, there was also an attack where you could see the *ears* were white. These guys were wearing balaclavas – their *ears* were white, those who were firing at me, because my home was next to a schoolyard. I survived even *that* one. Erm – they shot, they fired several shots. So. But – erm – yah... I think I'm giving you this scenario that I can quote so many of them, but the 1988 experience is the one that made me realise 'look, what is the point? These guys – people die of parcel bombs outside – Ruth First; a number of the victims of parcel bombs are overseas, and I realise – I mean if I want to escape death, specifically death, then I cannot escape death. So – and again, you know my popularity was another factor why I did not leave the country. I was really – I could feel I was, like, having people in the palm of my – I was – I was becoming – it was very clear that I was becoming more and more famous, but more and more notorious to the police or the government;

[Timecode – 00:27:55]

then I realised, if I were to leave – because I saw the impact, how I was always enthusiastically, you know, received, and it was like, there were poets before me but none – I mean, given the fact I would access and see the

impact and the *reaction* of people each time I rendered a poem, that jesus – it means there is something that I do that is so either charismatic or powerful – I could not explain. Now if I were to leave, given this moment in time and the fact that it was really happiness, like I was, yes, I'm told one was like a mysticator, but – it's like in the church when we have an evangelist, you know people will be fired up, and I thought – if I were to *go in exile*, I will *dampen* the spirit – because people look at me as their – not a *commander* – but, there was something about me, and I thought – if then the prophet will disappear, the prophet will *run away*, surely people will give up? And then the fight against apartheid – people will go back and say 'what is the point? A person was supposed to' – like a coach would run away from his own club or team. The whole thing about 'Captain, my captain' – if the captain himself is the one who jump first, and escape and allow people on the boat to sink, so – I realised that I – I *can't*. I didn't have a *rank*, a general or, you know, but I realised that if *me*, in particular, because I was invited and announced *everywhere* in the country, so – if *me*, given the moment in time, this popularity was growing, and if I were to *leave* the country; or, either, if I feared death – and remember this thing was playing on my ears all the time, in my mind, that I must go out and [...] stop the nonsense, stop making noise. I had to have a choice – do I listen to the masses, or listen to the oppressor? People were intimidating *me*, people have tortured *me*, and should I listen to *them*? This is terror; I have been terrorised, tortured – *why* should I? And Madiba, Mandela, people are in exile, people in Robben Island – who must I listen? I said, no, look man, I'm still alive, let me do my part. Let me do my part. And I continued. And I never – I never knew therefore that *later*, my name had a number; that I was now officially declared the enemy of the state. I'm sure if you guys are able – I got the number, I'm sure I lost it but – I – *eventually* when I appeared before the TRC in 2000, Jacobus Klopper asked for amnesty – and he's the one who testified mainly against Eugene de Kock – and their instruction – he was a member of the security branch – he's the one who confessed – they are the ones who attacked my place; they are the ones who came and placed explosives in my house; and I had a number, and the instructions from their superiors was to eliminate me, because I was the enemy of the state. Now – not just an *anti-apartheid activist*, but – some officers didn't appear before the TRC – but he was a credible – he was granted amnesty because he is the one who really did the damage against Eugene de Kock.

[Timecode – 00:31:12]

Erm, this year I happened to meet the – now he's minister of Arts and Culture, a minister, a former policing minister – told me something very interesting this year; that they had a file of – Robert McBride; that the *team* that dealt with Robert McBride – that prosecution team – dealt with two people: McBride and

Mzwakhe Mbuli. So – that one, now they were referring to my matter of 1997 – the bank robbery thing; these are the team, I mean you must know we tried three times at the regional court, twice at High Court, I was refused bail; and if you have prison facilities, juvenile, medium, maximum, C Max, I was placed at C Max, yet I was presumed, supposedly presumed innocent till proven guilty, but I spent 18 months awaiting trial and six years in prison. But I'm just giving you a scenario where I was like – they were *these* people who were dealing with Mzwakhe, and even in a post-apartheid situation, they were *still* dealing with Mzwakhe Mbuli. But, yah, but I'm glad I'm here; and I consider myself a victim, not a victim even – even the incident I'm telling about – even the person arrested me committed suicide, on the eve of the trial, Johann Venter, or somebody; but, yeah, here am I, and the Shifty Records, the history, we've come a long way, and um, yah...

MD: Shew. There's a lot there. Um, to move on a bit from your own – just your own experience to Shifty more generally, what – you've touched on this a little bit already, but what would you say is the most important, significant – what's the significance of Shifty, in the 1980s especially?

MM: Let me tell you, you know the most volatile period in South Africa? I've done the *One Humanity* movie, film – my contribution was predominantly about the 90s; because I'm sure Oliver Tambo talks about something else, there's Albert Lutuli there, Mandela, you know, activists, Mac Maharaj, you name them – but the workers; you know, COSATU was formed in the 80s, the UDF was formed in the 80s; most of these things happened in the 80s, the student movement, COSAS, in the 80s as well; I'm – yah – I think, the most significant period in South Africa even ungovernability, the state of emergencies, the 90s, is the 80s, so it's – it's – I don't know how to put it; that – it's *only* Shifty Records that existed, that was there, relevantly so, in the 80s, and erm, obviously it means that Lloyd Ross is not just ordinary. I mean if he allowed himself, allowed his studio Shifty, to – to record, as I said [...] a person like myself; because people used to say 'no, no, no, no – who is this Lloyd Ross, who is running Shifty Records?' you know? And Shifty Records was not run by communists or people from outside, so it was – an internal initiative, so it shows the relevance of Lloyd Ross and his contribution, because, again, I'm sure people would not have known me.

[Timecode – 00:34:54]

My career started in the church, I continued, but, er – well I continued even after I've left Shifty to do – I am – to be a household name; and I'm glad that – we part ways with Lloyd and then we again met and – catch up, and you know?

And even when, for this interview, I said to him 'a certain gentleman called Michael called me, and I'd lately said openly and I agreed to you on the phone I will avail myself, you know? The reputation of Shifty Records, yes, is underplayed; instead you know you talk of the big five, the big giants, the internationals, and erm – but, I'm glad you guys are doing a profile on the *most relevant* record company, that helped a number of people during the apartheid era; even your late Johannes Kerkorrel, you know? You had guys that were like African *rebels*, you know? [Laughs] So. *Very* powerful. And – it was sad that he committed suicide. But, at Shifty Records, the guys were against going to the army – I mean yah, I think, it's just that I'm sure whenever you speak to people you'll get to know the significant role played by Shifty Records, but what is good is that – [or in fact that you ...] I became the *darling of Madiba*, you know? I'm this person whose relevance was embraced by Madiba, and er – having the history of Shifty Records, so, it would speak volumes, you know?

And I mean, how I've evolved, my late mother used to wish that my father could be – resurrected and see his son, you know? That I was courageous, like I'm saying – I mean, I never – I'm just humbled by things I hear, about me. And every part of this country you find little Mzwakhes, there are Mzwakhes everywhere! I mean this, it's like a shiver – *everywhere* you go; you can't talk poetry today not mentioning the people's poet or Mzwakhe Mbuli. And erm – yeah, it's all humbling.

MD: Would you say that the spirit of Shifty, the kind of camaraderie between the artists – was very important for you as well, as a Shifty artist?

MM: It was, definitely. I think – I'm not sure whether – I can't find the right way to say, you know, some people use talk of a 'melting pot'. If people who talk about the '*Rainbow Nation*', this, that, non-racialism, it, that was, that happened at Shifty records, for example. Except – not sure whether Lloyd will tell you that, when we did an album at Shifty – because trombonists were not around, so – Jonas Gwangwa was abroad, was in exile – they, I remember a very nasty scenario, where people were listening to my tape, and, before they could – you know, improvise and play;

[Timecode – 00:38:21]

a brass section, so; and they said, 'listen to this stuff,' and he says 'no, this – man, *hy praat kak*' so they said 'no, this guy, this is just *bull*'; so they pack up and left. They would not [laughs] participate in that.

Yah, and again, there was, I know that – you know, people used to request, 'how come *Change is Pain* did not have a long play?', it was just cassettes, but the plant was obviously run by hostile *verkrampies* – so people who would not obviously allow in their plant to press – revolutionary poetry, yah.

But when it was banned it enabled us to – these guys – to release it abroad.

But one interesting thing also was that by the way the initial funding came from the late Dr Beyers Naude – I mean this is was in *Africa*, you know? I mean, he was running the South African Council of Churches. So that itself again should remind you of Madiba, when he said the person who spied, the person who spilled the beans, or the person who alerted the police, who showed Chris Hani was in Africa in [...]; and Madiba was trying to plead publicly that people should not go for a civil war, or play in the hands of the enemies – of our struggle, of our freedom, yeah.

MD: OK then, just the last question is – just a few thoughts from you on – what do you think Shifty's legacy is, looking back now?

MM: One big thing about Shifty – I'm not sure who's, who's. OK, one good thing – you know, Vusi Mahlasela is *big*; I mean Vusi is a product of Shifty Records. After I've left, there was Vusi Mahlasela.

I mean for the fact that you have Mzwakhe Mbuli – I mean *coming from Shifty Records*; I mean – that should be enough, to decorate Shifty's legacy; same as Vusi Mahlasela – is international acclaimed, and from – 'Sankomota' is no more, unfortunately, Frank Leepa is late. And they – they want the name 'Uhuru' but because of apartheid... I don't know, Lloyd will tell you how they thought they should compromise the name – and then it became 'Sankomota.'

And then unfortunately Johannes Kerkorrel is late; we honoured him last year. I'm doing awards – the posthumous awards – we honoured in 2012 Johannes Kerkorrel, yah. Yeah, I'm sure the number of musicians – you know there was a guy – he was a very, very versatile, gifted man – he was playing three instruments, guitar, violin and a concertina, his name was Noise Khanyile –

[Timecode – 00:41:27]

he later helped, worked obviously, with er – one or two recordings with Mango Groove. Noise Khanyile was part of that, he was a *maskandi* and *mbaqanga* artist. Yeah, look I mean I understand it could have been better, it's just that apartheid we could not, but I know, I remember there was a show at the Market Warehouse; there was a show where Lloyd made a statement with

those – we performed alongside with the late Johannes Kerkorrel, and um, yah, there were concerts. But look, Shifty could have done better – not under apartheid – they could not get funding; I mean if Shifty Records was *funded*, I mean I'm sure we'd be talking many stars, we'd be talking a different story today. But you can't take away anything from that. You can't – today if you are able to talk about Hector Pieteron, he was not a [...] – it's just that he was the first victim of June 16 uprising, so we will *always* talk about Hector Pieteron. So. You can't talk about the history of Mzwakhe Mbuli, or – I've done it deliberately, that wherever I explain where I started and I mention Lloyd Ross, Shifty Records, so – for as long as I am around, for as long as people read my profile, my biogs, they will always see the name Shifty Records.

So now, this year, [Dee Lloyd?] in London is writing a book, my biog – my life story; in August I am writing a poetry book – I think the preface will mention Lloyd Ross somewhere, and then – there's a – people are doing the one – the director of the *One Humanity*, Mickey Dube, they want to do a film. There are a number of people who want to do a life story of Mzwakhe, and then – it will never happen, it will never be complete, because when we start it won't start on the 5th or 4th gear, it must start where you started in the 1st gear. It will be a phase where you mention where it all started, phase two maybe, then you mention Lloyd Ross, for example, or Shifty Records. So, you can't dismiss it – it's like the history of South Africa; it will never be complete if you write about Mandela and leave out *artists*, you know, or the role played by the clergy. So then, again, you can't do it – you can't mention – if you want to mention Mambazo, Gallo [the record label], it's another story; but there's a specific part here: that we were like untouchables; so only Shifty Records was prepared to embrace the untouchables. Yah.

So it means it's a – Shifty Records should be remembered by... it's all about the resilience, OK? And the contribution of Shifty Records in the liberation struggle was *relevant*, will always be *relevant*. You can judge by its *products*. So if today I was a drunkard, today I was – a mercenary, today I was... then you would say it means Shifty couldn't produce quality but quantity. But instead I mean – you you – Shifty produced somebody *loved by Madiba*.

[Timecode – 00:44:37]

So [laughs] I'm just saying – I'm trying to spice up this thing that – erm – yah, I mean, Shifty – I will forever take off my hat for Lloyd Ross because he was prepared to – by that time he didn't know I was going to be big; but Shifty was – at the right place at the right time, and Lloyd was there, and we – we were driven by, should I say, freedom's spirit? I mean, I'm spiritual; that is why I always give God the glory, and the honour, and the majesty. But I survived,

you know? And I survived all the assassinations and the pain. I can't pin it to an individual and say it's because of this person and that bulletproof vest. You know, my survival history is that June 16, school uniform, white shirt; my friends shot in white shirts, blood – not live, but live [...] – so it's an amazing history, and erm, to where I am today. So – me, going to Shifty in the 80s was that I'm about to die; and I would not have really envisaged that I was going to see 2014. If they took – the O'Jays sing a song 'Where will you be in the year 2000?' [laughs] Me, I thought my end was somewhere in the 80s; I was reaching a ceiling. Then I was looking for Shifty Records: let me record and disappear or die.

But, I mean, it's very strange – it sounds weird when you say 'I recorded because I thought I was about to die, I recorded because I was hunted by death, I recorded because I was underground: you must remember also, Mike, I was not staying home – you would see me come out of disused bars or building. I would wear two, three track suits because, to be warm, erm... If you have street kids today, I have lived that life, and I know how it's like to be with people now, as we speak in the afternoon, but at night I would not know where to sleep. That was my life; and I have survived them all.

MD: Thank you very, very much for taking the time to tell us all those things.

[/ends]

