

Ronald Mofokeng

Summary¹

Ronald Mofokeng comes from Bethlehem where his father was a miner. He came from a poor family. He got his first job in 1964 but his union involvement began after 1971 after he started working for PG Glass and joined the Glass and Allied Workers Union (Gawu), which fell under the Urban Training Project.

He held leadership positions in Gawu initially at a factory level - which included sitting on liaison committees in his own factory - and later at the branch until he was elected president of Gawu. His interview describes the difficulty of organising before stop orders were recognised and when African workers were not legally allowed to belong to trade unions.

In the late 1970s Gawu merged with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU). Mofokeng was present at the inaugural congress of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu) in his capacity as national treasurer of CWIU. He was also elected Fosatu regional treasurer in the Wits region.

He describes the growing opposition to the apartheid regime and details how Sasol workers organised into CWIU took part in the national stayaway of 1984 which led to their mass dismissal.

As a national office bearer in one of the Fosatu unions he took part in the historic unity talks that led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in 1985. They united more workers around the slogan – one country, one federation, one industry, one union but failed to bring Nactu unions into the fold.

In 1987 he became national treasurer of Cosatu.

¹ This interview is a bit confusing in that he tends to jump around on issues and sometimes describes issues that are hard to decipher in terms of names and organisations. In some cases I asked Chris Bonner to help clarify some of what he says. Some of the issues we were not able to verify/clarify.

As a Cosatu national office bearer (national treasurer from 1987) he highlights various events during his time, some of which he was directly involved in: consumer boycotts, occupation of the factories, harassment by the apartheid regime, Cosatu's visit to Harare to meet the ANC and the signing of the Harare Declaration and the assistance that Cosatu gave to Namibia in the first elections.

He was deployed to parliament by Cosatu in 1999.

Facilitator: This is an interview with Ntate Ronald Mofokeng in Katlehong, the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Ntate thanks very much for your time, you are welcome to speak in any other language you feel comfortable with. Please can you give me your background, where do you come from and how you eventually ended up in the union structures?

Respondent: I am originally from Bethlehem, my father was a miner from my family biography, we were a poor family. My first job was in 1964 with a firm called Scotts Trupo, the name was then changed to Stewart and Lloyds, I was working in Receiving and Despatch and a bit of administration, shipping, import and export. That is how I started. I think I worked for them for 7 years, at the time I had no knowledge of labour issues. In 1971 April I joined PG Glass. This is where the labour politics began. I was a senior in the administration department for all administrators. I also assisted with despatch, receiving and invoicing.

I think when this all began with the unions together with people like Chris Dlamini, this happened around 1973, we began together. We joined an organisation called UTP (Urban Training Project) you've probably heard about it. Eddie Webster was also part of us, Louis, Phil Bonner and Chris Bonner. I worked a lot with Chris Bonner. At the time unions were not

recognised, we were using committees which were dysfunctional, liaison committees, works committees, works council. So I became the chairperson of it, we formed it with guys like Jacob Nthebe, who was the secretary, the liaison committee functioned and was well established, white people didn't like it but they were okay with it because it was toothless. When our grievances were taken to management they were not bringing back any better fruits. Until 1974/75 we formed the union UTP, the union was called Glass and Allied Workers Union, that was the first union formed, GAWU. So, I became chairperson of the branch, of Glass and Allied Workers Union until we were able to organise bigger firms in Springs like Bigturn?? Once we have organised them, there was a man called Mr Mhlanga, I forget his first name, he became the president and I became his deputy. I think as time went on, in 1977 September he died, we were still harassed trying to sort out union issues. We then went somewhere in Hammanskraal where the union was formalised, at Jubilee Hospital in Temba. Elections were held, it was very difficult at the time because I did not know where Jubilee was. After knocking off I hiked to Pretoria, when I got there I went to Hammanskraal until I arrived there. When I arrived there, I will never forget this day. The following day the meeting was held. I was elected as the president of GAWU. We continued to work and organised. Organisation was very tough because there were no stop order facilities. We started with around 50 cents per week which was for membership, if you became a card carrying member, eventually it went up to R2. 1977/78 and 1979 – we formed a Feasibility Committee, we met with unions that were a little bit well established, SAMU Municipality which was around Cape Town. I remember us flying to Cape Town with people like Cheadle(?) Thompson of the labour department and the secretary of the Food and Allied Workers Union, the white person who died at John Vorster, (Dr Neil Aggett)

I forget his name, he was also with us, Chris Bonner and them were also there, they had now formed what was called Chemical Workers Industrial Union from Durban, the secretary was Rod Crompton. Chris Bonner was the Transvaal branch secretary. Between 1978 and 1979, I think 1979, I found out that GAWU is not functional, we started talks about forming a federation. We then had to form industrial unions as well. We then started with the policy: one union per industry and one federation in the country. So we carried on. We amalgamated in Durban, Glass and Allied Workers Union, we combined them, amalgamated. I remember the first year I declined (to stand for any position), people were reluctant why chemical and glass were incorporated, others thought that I wanted a position. So I declined to stand for any position, just to prove to the masses, that my aim is to get the workers together.

After a year, between 1979 and 1980 I was elected as the National Treasurer of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, that was in 1979. Between 1980 and 1981, in our ups and downs, Vicinity?? And Consulting committee, we then formed FOSATU. It was formed in 1981 (1979) somewhere there, after its formation, we couldn't form a federation with them. After some time that is when I formed CUSA . We continued with FOSATU, when I was National Treasurer of chemical, I was elected as the ..(unclear) Transvaal, I was elected as the Regional Treasurer of FOSATU. Chris Dlamini was also there at the time, I believe he was assistant or president, we also had Maggie Magubane who became the general secretary of FAWU (at that time SFAWU). Then we had unions, T&G, Transport and General Workers Union, GAWU, the construction union, Sydney Mufamadi was also there, SAAWU from Eastern Cape, SAWU became part of CUSA . People like Phandelani Folofolo was also there, Cyril Ramaphosa also came. The proposal to organise mines, the idea

was from FOSATU but we didn't have a person who could organise the mines. We talked to Cyril and them and that is when Cyril became the secretary of union of mines.

Between 1984, we had managed to convince them, they suggested that the name be changed from FOSATU to a confederation, to join all the other unions, they called it SACTU. That is how it was called a congress, COSATU. Policies and preambles were formulated, I was involved for constructing the constitution of the labour movement by then. Now, after forming COSATU, things did not work out as planned. When we were in Durban we invited them, they came, we were able to pull people like Sydney Mufamadi, Cyril Ramaphosa and other few members, the seniors of SAWU refused, that is when they formed CUSA and changed it to NACTU. We carried on with COSATU (there's a lot of noise in the background) I became Regional Treasurer still holding on to the position of National Treasurer of chemical. From that foundation in 1984 upwards, it must have been late 1986 and 1987 that is when I took over as the National Treasurer of COSATU. The national office bearers was me, with Barayi as the president, Jay Naidoo as the secretary, Sydney Mufamadi as assistant secretary, then COSATU. So it was very difficult because we were chased by police in those years. I was still living in my four roomed house, they would come and fetch me and lock me up, it was really tough, they would arrest me in front of my children not knowing where they are taking me. I remember one May Day around 1988, one of our comrades was arrested, Prince Lehoko, he was in Protea, I received a message from him that I must tell them the truth regarding May Day. In no time they had arrived, I had literature, Karl Marx, I was trying to adopt Karl Marx's approach, I had a lot of literature, the books were taken from me.

Things continued. The aims and objectives of our level was we had different ideas, we had white people as well, they wanted to do ..(unclear) labour, we had different views and opinions to close the labour movement in firms but outside the firms problems are still there, we encountered a lot of problems. So we started to open local branches, the local branches will assist our problems and local problems. We had to talk about the unemployed workers, trying to bring all those problems together. I was the chairperson of ..(unclear – the sound quality is on and off). It was really big because if we met on a Thursday or whatever, we could be more than 2000 in numbers. We continued like that, obtained as much information as we could get, getting overseas donors to assist us, foreign unions were funding us, Federation of Labour Organisations in America was quite big ..(unclear) Confederation for Workers Union, something like that. So our policy in the chemical industry did not allow us to receive funds from America because America seemed to be biased, the funds were given to us with conditions. We did not want the money to have any conditions, this was not in line with our policies when discussing worker control. Worker control did not allow us to be dominated by a union from America or any other country. That is when we started dealing with old labour organisations that are from Scandinavian countries, ..(unclear)Sweden, Denmark, Finland. We worked a lot with them especially COSATU under Jay Naidoo.

I used to visit the Scandinavian countries with the chemical union, we used to visit Brussels, I went there a lot because they had a lot of chemical unions. IG Chemie (German chemical union) was one of the unions we dealt with. I remember going to Germany, Frankfurt for a month. We continued, I remained the National Treasurer of the chemical union and National Treasurer of COSATU, we had a lot of campaigns, the biggest we

had was in Sasol 2. It took us time to organise, I had to leave work and hike or get Chris Bonner to come and pick me up to organise Sasol. It took very long to be organised. I believe Sasol's labour force was plus/minus 8000 workers. We organised up to 4000 workers, management chased them away, when we tried to organise and had to prove to the company we were told that the people have been dismissed, so they are not going to recognise us. This went on for a long time until they gave up. The bosses by then accepted the union which was formed by Gatsha Buthelezi, UWUSA, it was formed in Sasol. It was formed because they were refusing to recognise unions, the workers were under pressure and wanted recognition. There was a big strike, people refused to go to work. This was a national **strike**, there's a difference between a general strike and a national strike. My understanding at the time was, if the mine strikes, the mines do not strike, to date I still believe so. If there's a disagreement between the workers and the bosses, I don't take it as a strike, I take it as a rampage. I call it a rampage because people working in the mines do not look for work at the mines, they are recruited outside the workplace, not knowing where he is going, whether he is going to Ellisburg gold mine or Kloof gold mine or Western deep mines. When he gets there he does not have a place to stay, he lives in the compound, he is given compound food, he drinks their water, they shower at the compound etc., he goes to work and when he returns he is back at the compound. I call it a rampage, when there's a strike they are underneath the ground, they have nowhere to go, their militancy will be that the person who must open for them will close it down so that they cannot get out. They have tools with them and cannot get out, if an argument can erupt, people will die. If they decide to strike when they are not in the mines, and they do not want to work, they are living on the compound, whose home is it. If they are on strike the bosses will decide not to give

them food. The people will be without food, no water, no shower, etc. So it's a rampage. That is my understanding about mine strikes. The employer can easily say to the employees, if you are on strike I don't have to feed you or give you accommodation. So it is not easy for them to go on strike. It's a rampage. When a national strike was called for Sasol, I requested for Sasol not to be on strike because of those reasons. Everybody decided to go against my decision. I tried to explain the situation they went against my decision even though I explained the reasons. I also understood that the armed struggle, we are supposed to assist the economy ..(unclear), the economy is bad. At the time we were not so many, there were mixed politics and we were not going anywhere. The ANC has been banned it is in exile, we meet them in Tanzania at Morogoro and other places. They were trying to help us by sending their cadres to come and bomb – Sasol was a better place for me. A few of us started underground networks. We were checking the Sasol oil pipe, petrol pipe from Sasol 1 going to Standerton, under the Vaal River, it then goes to the Durban refinery. We wanted the main poles so that it can be bombed, the fire will also affect Sasol compounds. This will bomb Sasol 1 and bomb the refinery in Natal, ANC must be alert when this is happening, it was the right time for revolution to take place. As they are busy trying to stop the fire, tanks bombing, that was our aim. After hearing my views, some understood. We did not get anywhere with Sasol, the militancy high, boys like Meshack Ravuku, Brian Moholo, Bheki Ntshalintshali they were working for Sasol, we recruited them as organisers, JJ Mabena, when he was given Colgate, it was a long time after the big Colgate strike whereby people were told not to buy Colgate products.

We continued with the strikes, I went to Sasol trying to stop the people, we were packed at Embalenhle stadium, I did not get anywhere. This is when

they called people like JJ who insulted me, surprisingly I had left my family, at night the police came, when the police came people like JJ were jumping off from the third floor jumping down. Things were bad, there was a Xhosa man who was very cheeky, he was saying that we will win. I told him that Sasol is a giant and it cannot be easily beaten. That guy the following day he was arrested in Standerton, he was travelling to Transkei on foot. Things were bad. That is what we called a national strike in solidarity, now why the national strike. We were trying to deal with the regime, to put it on hold so that it does not get information about the ANC in exile.

Now there was the question of one industry one union, one country one federation. So a lot of people did not understand the slogan. If it's one union per industry, we will be talking the same language, they will all have similar problems. Another union will not be able to organise against the union because everybody will fall under one union. This will assist the union in terms of numbers, no other union will be able to organise other members and get this union dismissed. It is not wise for companies to have 2 or 3 unions because this gives management a chance to choose which union it wishes to negotiate with, if the other union accepts for instance a 5% increase, the other one will not have a choice but to accept. The union asking for more money can be easily dismissed. Furthermore, when there's a national strike, combining it with a plan of action, you must have tactics ..(unclear) – the whole nation will be blocked, it will not move. But you don't enter townships because you do not want to hurt the workers by fighting them or forcing them to eat soap etc., you don't want it to happen that way, I never wanted that until today. If people strike in the factories, you are going to stop people who do not know anything about unions from going to work – beating people

not to get into trains or busses, it's anarchy, that kind of strike is not a real strike – we are always talking about democracy, it involves good leadership which is an anarchy. How can we keep saying we have democracy with no leadership, planning to go and vandalise Johannesburg leaving this place with no leadership, definitely one of us go this way, the other one that way etc. It's anarchy.

And then we connected with CP ..(unclear) which we started at the time, we started something called Occupational Strike combined with CP??, I suggested that in order for these people not to meet and cause anarchy, sleep in Modderfontein, occupy those workplaces and not work. Staff the protests ..(unclear) then go straight to the picket lines, management will want to chase you away ..(unclear) we were allowed picket line, you have to cut it for instance like from there ..., because management will stop you from ..(unclear) those are the picketing lines, you will picket from there. That is the way it is supposed to be done. And then because we had a network of one union per industry, we had tried this earlier, we wanted one region per country, COSATU was the biggest but ..(unclear) NACTU, FEDUSA and others were used to ..(unclear) because the aim was if the government starts assisting the capitalists, when we are on the other hand fighting capitalism with capital super exploitation, we wanted to stop it. We wanted the government to send in the army and the police to assist, when they assist, our meetings will then be able to call leaders of Transport and General, call the Food and Allied Workers Union, the Chemical Workers Union, call LTDA?? – so when we started it was called black in action, we have to boycott everything by then. When you are boycotting everything it means everything is on hold, you make sure that LTDA is spread, together with Huletts sugar and all that, LTA is also capitalistic and has invested some assets in there, you make sure that

..(unclear) and sugar fields, they make sure that sugar is brought home and not be available for a long time so that if this can go for three months with no sugar, we also organised coffee, there won't be coffee, textile has also been organised blankets are not manufactured, we organised transport, transport will not go and collect chemicals for the chemical industry , the chemical industry is also not manufacturing chemicals and medicine, mines have also stopped. Everything comes to a stand still, ..(unclear) Botha will not be able to make calls because Temsa in Springs was also organised, there will be no telephonic communication, emergency services will not have access to medication, essential services will have problems with electricity. That is what was called black reaction, we had moved to that level when we went there. By that time I was arrested in Asia, the Phillipines. I arrived there and was living in town, I was there to assist them with the strike, this is when I saw the victim, the strike lasted for 9 months, as they were on strike some woman gave birth to a child. I was arrested when I was going to bail for a 27 year old, they said I looked like him. I was arrested and already sentenced to life. Everything came to a stand still. I was arrested in America, I was in Sao Paolo, I was busy writing my speech about the struggle. The person sitting next to me had security, the next thing my luggage is taken out and I was locked up. It was really tough at that time. So Cuba ..(unclear) solidarity and how I can be assisted. Those were the issues of the union, I think I can stop there.

Facilitator: when did you take a break from the union structures?

Respondent: this happened on 22 November if not December 1989, I received a letter from Nelson Mandela from Victor Verster. I think we were less than 10 in our office, Thola, Jay Naidoo, Cyril Ramaphosa,

Murphey Morobe, Samson Ndou, Sydney Mufamadi – Mandela was inviting us to come and see him. I was not there when the letter arrived, I was right in Maseru in Lesotho attending a funeral. They called me and I went there, I spent the night at the chief ..(unclear) Dullah Omar, he took me to Victor Verster. This was the end of 1989 December. This is where I met with Mandela. He explained to me that things are going to come right. I asked him a lot of questions and touched on Gatsha Buthelezi, Mangope, and then he said to me let us not discuss them because the place is bugged. That is how I got to know Gatsha's history. When Mandela was released in February 1990 and then we were introduced to what is called today Peace?? Forums, the Top 5 MCs ..(unclear) with SACP ..(unclear) printing that the ANC is taking over. Most people went to Harare for the Harare Declaration I was amongst those people, we stayed at Sweden or Hilton Hotel in Harare. I think the biggest suite in the hotel was occupied by me and Thabo Mbeki, we were quite a few so Mbeki and I shared the suite. Steve Tshwete arrived late .., we didn't sleep that night that is how we learnt that Thabo is a hard worker. The whole night he was up, he continued working, drinking whisky with Tshwete. I slept around 12 or 1. At 5 in the morning Thabo was already awake, dressed and wearing his tie. I went to sleep before him and when I wake up he is awake and already dressed. That is how I discovered what a hard worker he is.

After that we got to know about the elections of 1994, we started preparing for elections in 1992/93. I went to Scandinavia to get educational funds and for buying computers (noise in the background) – we were all over the place, being a former and founder president of Glass and Allied Workers Union and a former and a founder member of both FOSATU and COSATU, I was much recognised by then by a lot of workers.

So, I got involved at the time, doing activities of the time. When SWAPO took over, when was it again ..?

Facilitator: 1990

Respondent: When SWAPO took over, we were the main people who assisted Nojoma because I sent out a lot of shop stewards, more than 500, we signed an agreement with Volkswagen who gave us more than 100 vehicles which went to Namibia, these helped them when they were organising in Namibia, they assisted, we made sure that we scooped the whole election process, the work was well done. We made sure that there were enough computers when we doing voter education. Then the violence started, just before the elections, I was almost shot next to the church. The car had followed me from the airport when I was coming back from Cape Town. They followed me, and I was able to notice them on time. I managed to escape. I didn't want to run, I walked slowly so that if they do shoot me they shoot me when I'm nearer home. The bullet missed me.

Thereafter I believe I was one of the main planners of .., we didn't know how we were going to secure ourselves, but we had to be well armed. I went for shooting lessons, how to handle a gun and things like that. I negotiated for people like me to be trained in gun handling, mostly senior people and shop stewards. I remember negotiating for 75 guns so that I can give to the people, in preparation for 1994.

In 1994 I was supposed to have stopped labour and go to parliament. I got a letter of demand from Mandela to go to parliament. I was with Chris Dlamini and Jay Naidoo. We had a meeting, I refused to go to

parliament because I felt that we would be betraying the labour movement, we cannot let the whole leadership of the labour movement go to parliament. We had to remain in the labour movement, so we finally agreed that Jay Naidoo, Chris Dlamini and Sydney Mufamadi, I remained with the labour movement, ..(unclear) Godfrey Olifant. We then went to the elections, Shilowa came in, and Sydney was already gone at the time, he (Shilowa) became the general secretary, he was nowhere all along. I believe he was the president of T&G. So that is it, I could not go to parliament in 1994 and remained in the labour movement again from 1994 to 1999, in 2000, I am sure I was the only, even now it so happened for Sydney to be elected unopposed, I have never been opposed to elections, if delegations were 2000 I would take the whole 2000. Only once I was opposed at DH (Williams)?, I was opposed by those coming from, I can't remember who was opposing me, Duma Nkosi was opposing Paul Nkuna, I won. I think the next one after me had about 100 and something and I had 700 and something votes. I refused to take the seat, I told them that I feel those people have a cause, they must have a reason, being in a democracy let us give them a chance, they are obviously not convinced that I can lead. After my refusal, the elections were withdrawn, Paul was unable to take the seat, there was someone else opposing him, we want to go together. There was a big fight, the elections were withdrawn in Alexander. The third elections, we have no leadership, the next elections were held at Regina Mundi. They started the elections with the Treasurer, Treasurer Ronald Mofokeng unopposed, I was forced to accept, there was no way to go, I had to accept the position, then Paul and the others, Sydney was also there. And then after that, the next elections, I had no opposition, I said to them this seems like labour autocracy because it seems there's no one who can take this position in here. I asked to step down because what will happen if I am

not there anymore, I have always been in the labour struggle. I have never enjoyed anything, I was not used to watching movies. The police used to arrest me a lot and they also asked me to spy for them. I remained as I was. I bought cars to console myself, it is because I believed it is the end of my life I must console myself.

When I came back from parliament I decided to buy myself the last car, I told my wife that this is the last car I am buying after parliament. I went to parliament in 1999 when I left the labour movement to make way for other people. I left parliament last year in May.

Facilitator: The relationship between the ANC and the unions, how did it start, was it formal or just informal, when you look back in the 1970s and 1980s?

Respondent: It was informal and turned formal. When we were in FOSATU during the 1980s, others were in NACTU, we had a right and left wing, FOSATU was perceived to be moderate and not radical, we were called workerists, the others saw themselves as revolutionists and populist. Populist and workerists because when we were responding to certain things, there were populists. Now at the time, Sydney and the others in exile, they had infiltrated other organisations, SACTU was based in Zambia. Whilst they are busy, NACTU and ANC they've had underground network I think from the 1980s, when some of us were ..(unclear) – informally the relationship existed, there was a way in which they communicated. It was formalised during the 1980s

Facilitator: the role of women in the labour movement, was it strong or how did you evaluate it?

Respondent: they were much stronger, much stronger than the ANC Women's League. We had women's leadership in the labour movement .., they were powerful

Facilitator: You also mentioned that there was a debate between white and black unionists, of taking the struggle outside, the working environment and so on. Does it mean that whites never realised that there was this kind of oppression in the township ..(unclear) there's a link between working and outside oppression?

Respondent: I think there was that sense but there were white people from Auckland Park, they belonged to a group, next to the graveyard, there was a section that called themselves Ganxile??? – they fell under that group and Thafi belonged to another group, ..(unclear) from GAWU, I forget his name, they were the ones that were seen as revolutionaries, their politics was .. (unclear) that is why FOSATU was called a workerist organisation, that is the way things were.

Facilitator: You also mentioned that at some point in time, GAWU had some problems, it was not functional, what were the issues?

Respondent: What was not functional was co-ordination and ..(unclear), we were not exposed when we were under GAWU because we were ordinary workers from there we had no intellectuals or anybody, the union did not have white people, only ordinary general workers who ran the movement, we had no academics. We would run out of funds, plus the fact that the subscriptions were collected manually, no stop order facilities. I went to Bloemfontein, I organised there, I had travelled by

train. You can imagine when I travelled back from Bloemfontein by train and had to be back at work by Monday. During the week I had to work. When I was organising, I went to all PG branches, I was a national shop steward of PG, at the same time I was a senior shop steward at my place of work. Somehow I managed to organise PG branches, I would deliver cards and letters through the drivers, I would still go out to organise. I went to all the PG branches, all towns had a PG, they have about 300 branches, PG Humburg, PG Roodepoort, PG Randfontein, PG Port Shepstone, Klerksdorp PG, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng. All of them were organised by me, PG Pietersburg, PG Potgietersrust, PG Warmbath. After that I came to the Free State and visited them all, I even went as far as Lesotho to organise PG Maseru, and went to Botswana. After they were all organised, going towards Hemisphere, from Southern Hemisphere, I entered PG Malawi, I organised it also the old Rhodesia, Zimbabwe. I went to Australia, PG Franco ..(unclear) in Australia, PG Sydney, PG Queenstown. I organised them all.

I was then invited to an international conference in Brussels, the chemical workers had already joined us, the Gulf in the Middle East, we already had a union friend there. Eventually I was appointed as International Deputy President for the whole world including Brussels.

Facilitator: When you look back, was it worth it to be involved in labour issues?

Respondent: If I see the difference today, I think it was worth it to have done that otherwise we would still be in the bondages of apartheid, secondly this caused confusion to the present regime, to the government, assisted the ANC new ideas so that when the ANC is fighting from exile,

they have support from the people who remained in the country, this assisted in terms of the economy. When I addressed a meeting in Dunhill in America during the Sasol era, Sasol had already fired a lot of people, we would have to start again from the beginning and organise the 6000 members. We didn't want to lose members anymore.

We hid underneath a VW after beating an army security guard, ..(unclear) he came back with a gun, someone tipped me off to say one of the guys is carrying a gun, they wanted to shoot Chris or .., I left as if I am going to the toilet, I couldn't fight him he was too strong, we caught him and I remember his gun touching me, there was a fight and we were all arrested and identified, all the people who were there. When we arrived there, he was bloody, after they bathed him on our return after 11 pm. Around 2 or 3 in the morning – I just left the room, I became very brave and just walked out, I realised that they were going to kill me if they discovered. When I got outside the place was full of soldiers from the army. That is how I survived.

Now I addressed a meeting ..(unclear) America, I had a young boy who was already president ..(unclear) to Pietersburg, Turfloop ..(unclear) he can come there and ..(unclear). I addressed Dunhill, I think there was about 1 million people, those are some of the activities I was involved in. When I was appointed as a card carrying member of SACP, I did not join SACP here, I joined it in Zambia when we were talking about how to government. The meeting was chaired by Cyril and myself, Pallo Jordan was also there, the secretary was Joe Slovo. That night, they came to my room and asked me to join SACP, I refused, they convinced me and eventually I joined.

SACP in my understanding, you don't join it by recruiting members, it's self esteem, showing true leadership of the vanguard of workers. You push yourself to get there, the track record gets you there. That is how they convinced me, they had heard about me, so I joined.

Facilitator: Any closing words?

Respondent: In closing I can say thanks for coming to me to get my story, my statement is conflicting, it is going here and there because we talked about things which were not recorded. I still say thanks to the Lord, that here we are today, some of us were involved, to date we see people who hold top positions in government, they don't know where they come from. Most of them I don't know them. I was in parliament, sometimes it was boring to be a parliamentarian because decisions were not taken in the way that we are talking now. I've been so unfortunate that when I was in parliament it took me a long time to be elected as the chairperson of Minerals and Energy for the whole country and I was in the position for the shortest period of time, the normal duration is 5 years, I was there for less than 2 years and was removed. I didn't know what was the reason, but by that time I had negotiated with the mines ..(unclear) how many thousands ..(unclear), then I was moved from there.

Secondly, just when I thought I was settled, when Free State had problems, Ace had differences with Mme Winkie, I was called in to assist. I worked in the Free State for almost a year as their political bureau there, directing both legislature and ANC on the other side. I dismantled over 190 branches and re-started them again, I worked 24 hours. I was working better there because ANC had money, I had a driver, security guards etc. I worked 24 hours, the whole of Free State, I dismantled them and

introduced political education from there we appointed internal leaders. I then took them to a conference where I was appointed as the chairperson of Minerals and Energy. I refused to return they changed my ticket to a single ticket to go to Cape Town. My family, my wife has always supported me, she remained my wife and our children supported me. I had no money to educate my children, and I have very intelligent children – one of my children got 98 and 99 when they studied maths, they couldn't move beyond because I had no money, I had no money to sponsor them. In the end I brought them to Vaal Tech, that is where they obtained their BTech. My first born, he studied BA Administration, he is the last one and he works for COSATU, this is his 18/19th year with COSATU. She was the assistant national accountant. He first worked for NEHAWU, he was handling more than 40 branches, all the national accounts, he is still there, he is not getting that much but I said I don't see the use of joining politics, take another field. When I had money I paid for him to study CIS which took him 9 years because he was working. He passed all 18 subjects, he couldn't become a CA because they said he does not qualify to study CA at university, he has started again with Unisa. He has 9 subjects out of 34 subjects. He passed matric twice, the third time here, the first time he did it in Lesotho, he has three matric certificates. Since 1989 he struggled to date. He has one belt only he should be having 2 or 3, my children understand the struggle. I had no choice.

Facilitator: Thanks for your time

End