

Oupa Msiza

Facilitator: This is an interview with Oupa Msiza we are in Nelspruit the date is 10 August 2012. Comrade thanks very much for your time. Just kindly give me your background, your family background, where you were born, where you come from, issues of schooling and how you ended up in politics/unions.

Respondent: Thanks very much for the opportunity Brown, 1977 and like most of the young people, black people in particular I come from one of the most rural villages in Mpumalanga called Libangeni. It was named after one of the kings of the Ndebele tribe in those areas. By the way I am Ndebele speaking by birth, I belong to the Msiza and Mahlangu clan, my mother is Mahlangu.

I started schooling in 1984, I then matriculated in 1995. 1996 I had to migrate to Vanderbijl, I resided in Sebokeng and I had to register there as a law student at Vista University (phone rang) in Sebokeng Campus. Unfortunately I hadn't done well in terms of studies which led me to dropping out of the university due to student politics as it were. If you recall in those days, even to date there is some .., there is still that phenomena of the university treating students on the basis that if you owe a particular fee you cannot sit for your exams and so forth. Now in those days there were riots at campus level in which students retaliated by burning the campus, you know there was just a lot of kayos, a lot of things happening there and some of us of course were suspended from the varsity by the varsity management and of course there were instances of criminality in which police had to intervene. The whole situation led me to ultimately leave Vista in Sebokeng.

The entire situation nearly messed my life such that I had to resort to looking for a job. I went back to Pretoria looking for a job and I landed some jobs in the security sector, working with the security guard and that in itself further sharpened my political consciousness as a young worker at the time. Now in the sector of security I

then went to the trade union, Transport and General Workers Union which merged with SARWU in 2000 to form what is called SATAWU today. And at that point in time that's where my trade union movement consciousness was highly sharpened, starting as a young shop steward, I became the Chairperson of the SATAWU local as it were

Facilitator: In Pretoria?

Respondent: In Pretoria yes, but it was called Limpopo Region but of course I was based in Pretoria. And since then I changed jobs from security to government, today I'm in FAWU, in brief that speak to my background in terms of my schooling and the working background. But of course still on schooling I'm also pursuing my HR studies with Unisa currently. Ja

Facilitator: And how did you end up at Vista, Sebokeng of all the universities, why not Daveyton Campus?

Respondent: My father had a house in Sebokeng so that informed my migration from Kwa-Ndebele to study there in Sebokeng.

Facilitator: So you say university politics prepared you for life beyond Sebokeng Campus?

Respondent: Definitely that's where it all started.

Facilitator: And the security sector, you were just looking for a job in Pretoria and bumped into the world of security, how did you ..(unclear) because security is a

tough business, from being a university student to be a security that's a tough transition?

Respondent: Ja definitely well the intention was to make a living, and of course I found that there was so much exploitation within the sector of security as it is to date. Workers are being underpaid and so forth. That also agitated me quite a lot in terms of forging forward with the struggle of the workers within the union and of course it contributed in making me a better cadre which I think to some degree I am today politically speaking. I hate exploitation so much.

Facilitator: You then became a shop steward there, why you, you were young, still young?

Respondent: Well I can assure you I was very young, I became a shop steward at a tender age of 20 or 21 if I recall and the reason I was actually elected as a shop steward as it were is precisely because I'm vocal. I never had so much knowledge in terms of politics, or union politics if you like then, however the reason that I'm very much vocal and vociferous, fearless if you like that encouraged my own colleagues in electing me ultimately as a shop steward.

Facilitator: But your knowledge of union politics how did you go about that, did you have to undergo some training, in serviced training or experience and so on which made you to formalise yourself in the world of unions?

Respondent: Well we were taken through training workshops and the trade union movement consciousness, political consciousness and to some degree class consciousness of course. But beyond that I'm a firm believer in self cultivation. I had to do more political work on my own by studying on my own, doing informal research about unions, their backgrounds, what they stand for and so forth and so

forth. So largely my knowledge in terms of unions was expanded through the process of self cultivation.

Facilitator: And what were the pressing shop floor issues at SATAWU when you became the shop steward and later the chairperson for the branch. What were the pressing issues there?

Respondent: Well there is what is called pay query within the sector, that's when you are working and when you are about to get your salary or your wage at the end of the month it doesn't come as you have expected it, for instance it's a shift work in the security sector by the way. Now what the employers do, they would just give you a particular amount of money which is not equivalent to the kind of shift that you have already worked at that point in time. So that was one of the issues and of course the other issue was the working conditions, general working conditions of the security guards. They will be deployed somewhere in some area just in the outskirts of Pretoria as an example (interruption - sorry about that) –

Facilitator: You were still talking about working conditions and being deployed in ..?

Respondent: Ja in which at times there is no guard room, a small house in which you have to stay perhaps the whole night meanwhile you are on duty and so forth. But again issues of benefits, in particular the provident fund. I think at that point, many companies never offered provident fund to their workers as a benefit, you only had UIF and that was all.

Facilitator: But were those issues resolved or overcome, working conditions, salaries or benefits?

Respondent: I would say they have improved quite a lot Brown. There are still pockets of disputes around the same issues like I said the sector itself is one of the sectors which are exploiting its own workers, the security industry even to date Ja although things are improving gradually and they're only hoping for the best.

Facilitator: But when you were a shop steward then, were workers willing to be part of the union, of SATAWU, or they had to be actually dragged into it?

Respondent: Well in sectors which there is much exploitation, at least the workers find themselves with no choice but to join the unions, so participation yes, it was encouraging as it were but of course in some instances you will have people that ..., due to their orientation of course, do not want the unions, they negatively believe that if you join the union you gonna be dismissed, unions are not okay, the only way that your own problems can be resolved in the workplace is just to pray and so forth. You know the issue of ideology plays a role in that respect Brown.

Facilitator: So when you look back what would you say were you best highlights in SATAWU?

Respondent: It's a tough one, however what comes to mind is the National Security Strike which we had back in 2006, it was a nationwide strike in which we had to go on strike for approximately 3 months fighting some of the issues which I have mentioned, your provident fund, but of course in the main it was wages. Now the bosses at it were very much intransigent, typical of themselves not wanting to adhere to the workers demands and so forth. So what was significant about the strike as well is that it was quite violent, so much violence such that people were killed, though according to the South African media, as union leaders as it were and security guards were responsible, but according to us of course yes there was some ..., like any other strike you will have aids and provocateurs people that would take advantage of a strike action and commit crimes, but again Brown I have to mention

that perhaps that's the reason in the LRA a strike action is considered as a last resort that must be pursued by the workers. I think that is precisely because a strike in essence is violent, you can't avoid violence when we talk about strikes, that is a fact. No of course 52 people died and some of them of course are reported to have been scabs, what we refer to as *amagundwane*, people that are going to work meanwhile others are embarking on a strike you know. So that for me that was one of the most incidents which were quite significant during my tenure as a union leader, as it were in SATAWU.

Facilitator: But in the end did you guys win after the strike?

Respondent: We did because we, I remember there was, our sectoral determination as it were it was improved, particularly around the issue of working shifts, in which currently it is quite clear that you need to work 16 shifts per month and beyond that it will be regarded as overtime, that 16 shifts or 192 hours per month of which it was never the case before. There was a situation in which before you would just work perpetually without limits, at the discretion of the employer, at least for me, to some degree yes we won some battles and because it's a strike, you win some battles you lose some. Currently there are still problems but we are hoping that they are going to be resolved in future through workers themselves pushing hard and hard on what they want from the bosses.

Facilitator: And then issues of security, did you ever raise these things as SATAWU members being a security guard means security even for yourself as well. I mean your life is at stake, was that ever an issue that was raised with the bosses?

Respondent: Yes I remember at some point we, in fact we raised this particular issue quite a lot with the bosses. For instance you will have other workers whom in their respective workplaces, they carry guns as part of their duties or responsibilities and so forth, now as a result they become a target for that. Now we raised such issues

but I will tell you Brown, the bosses were neither, and the bosses are never interested in issues that affect the workers themselves all that they pursue is profits and profits all the way. the situation hasn't changed even today and that is not peculiar to the sector itself but in all workplaces. Employers are concerned about profits and nothing else unfortunately.

Facilitator: So that's still a problem even to date?

Respondent: It's still a problem even to date, not much has improved in that regard.

Facilitator: Did you have to deal with disciplinary cases as a shop steward?

Respondent: Ja quite a lot Brown, as a shop steward of course you deal with disciplinary cases of your own comrades, they will be charged for a variety of allegations, insubordination, gross insubordination, damage to property and all of that. So disciplinary cases within the sector is the order of the day, but of course in many cases workers become victorious because what the bosses will do is to actually press charges against workers based on emotions if you like, it is still a problem even to date, dismissing workers unfairly instead of focussing on the factors that cause particular problems in the workplace, they just run to dismissing, discipline and so forth. Ja.

Facilitator: But most of these cases were they winnable?

Respondent: Well let me say this, we knew that when we are to sit for a particular case at company level it will end up at the CCMA, that was our believe. We never believed in the internal mechanism to resolve problems in the workplace. We just followed them for the sake of doing it, in compliance with the company policy and

so forth but in many cases when the employers are put on a disciplinary process, the intention is to dismiss you, they will just go there with a pre-determined conclusion that this one must go unfortunately

Facilitator: Okay so it becomes an issue then.

Respondent: It becomes an issue but at least we will go to the CCMA we will just go there and become vindicated by the process

Facilitator: Did you receive in service training while you were still at SATAWU, to handle these cases as a shop steward and so on?

Respondent: Well there are training workshops though Brown they are not quite intense, they are not elaborate if you know what I'm saying which is why most of us believed in self cultivation, on your own you must just ensure that you equip yourself with what you are responsible of in the workplace, whether it's handling of cases or any other task related to union work. You must just ensure that you are well equipped.

Facilitator: And how long were you there in SATAWU?

Respondent: I think I was there for four years I think, it's not a long period but well you are exposed to so much.

Facilitator: Did you become the enemy of the employers?

Respondent: Yes Brown I became an enemy number one if you like, there was an instance in which we embarked on a strike action, at company level. I spoke about the national strike earlier on, but this one was at company level, the dispute was again wages. Now during the strike when there were instances of violence and everything else, so the company instead of engaging us, calling us to the table to look into all these issues, they sought to pursue us .., fabricating criminal charges against some of us in which at some point of course I was arrested in 2005 I think, I can't recall the exact month, it was April for alleged assault. I was arrested I think on the 18th of April, I was put into cells in Brooklyn Police in Pretoria, on the 19th I was then taken to Sunnyside, the charge later changed to what the police called the "Contempt of the High Court Order". By the way there was a high court order prohibiting us not to interfere with workers whom are not on strike and so forth and so forth. Well I was then .., I went to court I think it was on the 20th, Pretoria Magistrate Court in which the judge ordered that I should be released. I was just given a small piece of paper by a policeman which was written that my case has been scrapped from the roll. And when I consulted with the union, for me it was clear that it was an unlawful arrest and I then had to approach my own lawyers in which we pursued the matter against the state, it ran for four years but ultimately I was vindicated. The judge agreed that it was of course an unlawful arrest. It went to the civil court. So it was actually a collaboration by the company with some senior police members in effecting this particular arrest. In essence they were bogus. The kind of charges that were pressed against us were never proven. It was my first as first arrested, and the other week my colleagues also followed, they were arrested. So I know that the bosses of the company that I worked for as it were they feared me and they always perceived me as poisonous and all of that. I was proud of that and I still have that attitude even to date, perhaps the situation has changed because I'm now working for a union, I'm no longer faced with ruthless bosses if you know what I mean, except of course in companies in which we are organising, ja. But of course I was an enemy of the company. They never liked me, instead they preferred other shop stewards as opposed to preferring me, a divide and rule tactic which is applied by bosses everywhere.

Facilitator: So there were kind of weaker shop stewards and stronger shop stewards?

Respondent: Ja it's always the case even today Brown, you have weaker shop stewards, you have strong shop stewards, you have strong union leaders even at the level of national, across all affiliates, even in COSATU, whether it's FEDUSA, these other federations, it's always the case which is not a problem as such but of course the most important thing is collective work. For instance at some point we were a committee of 10 member committee of shop stewards, we had myself, we had others, but of course we strengthened each other in terms of the kind of skills that you possess as a collective. The only problem is when the employer is now dividing. For me that's a problem because what employers would do is they will play a divide and rule tactic, approaching these shop stewards and saying "but wena you are good you are not like Oupa etc", they were there, I know for a fact that our Branch Chairperson as it were of the 10 Member Committee was preferred by the bosses, some of us were just enemies of the bosses and all of that. So it's a kind of divide and rule tactic which it's inevitable in the trade union movement or in the workplace generally.

Facilitator: Why did you leave then, your job, what was the main of the company?

Respondent: It was Maxi Security based in Orange Groove

Facilitator: Why did you leave after four years?

Respondent: Well at some point I became sick and such that I couldn't sustain working and I just had to quit the job and I went back home to Kwa-Ndebele, I think I spent almost a year and half without working and as you know there's a saying that goes "every cloud has a silver learning". At that point when I recovered from illness and as a revolutionary I then had to participate in the local structures, in the ANC, the SACP, up until I landed a job in the local municipality back home as a Disaster Management Officer and I was then put on training, qualified. I remained with the

municipality for three years, I then resigned voluntarily without being pushed around by anybody and which is why I am here today in FAWU, it's not long that it's been FAWU, I started in March this year.

Facilitator: So you are very new here?

Respondent: I'm very new in FAWU but not new in the trade union movement politics.

Facilitator: But then you became a Disaster Manager

Respondent: Management Officer

Facilitator: Which meant that you were a government employee but then you had to face up to SAMWU, the union this time around. And how did you handle that I mean you came from a union background and now you're working for the government and at local level there's SAMWU. How did you deal with that, how did you combine the two worlds?

Respondent: Well I think for me it was a privilege to join the municipality back in 2008 and ultimately to be part of the SAMWU local as a member of course, it was a privilege and a benefit to members of SAMWU in that municipality precisely because here you have someone who's been there before, having been so much active in union politics, so I just brought a wealth of experience about unions into SAMWU, more so because SAMWU as you know historically recruited elderly people, mostly uneducated though to some extent the situation has changed today, you have young people who are members of SAMWU who are workers in our municipalities however the problem is that most of them just come from universities, colleges, from

schools, they don't have a deeper understanding about unions and their role in the unions and so forth, against it speaks to the ideology. For me that was a challenge. Then we had to collaborate with colleagues in the union to ensure that we put up programmes in order to raise the consciousness of the workers and so forth. I think to some extent they yielded some results.

Facilitator: And did you enjoy your stay there?

Respondent: Well look Brown, I'm not sure whether enjoy is an appropriate term, however I can relate to you in this way, municipalities as one sphere of government are highly politicised. I came there during the municipality as a tried and tested cadre if you like, as a revolutionary, however what you experience in that municipality like all municipalities in the country, is that there are factions, small groups of people who are in conflict with one another. There was a point in which the Municipal Manager never saw eye to eye with the then Executive Mayor mainly because of the clash or rather the ..., let me put it this way, you have the political wing, you have the (phone rang) you know Brown the reason our municipalities are collapsing to date is mainly because you have the political administration within the municipality, that is the Mayor, the speaker, the Chief Whip, the Councillors who want to ..., or rather who are meddling in the affairs of the administration, they want to influence the appointments of officials and they want to influence tenders as well. They want to instruct the municipal manager being the accounting officer of the municipality as to which tender to give to person (a), company (a), company (b) and so forth. But as well you have some officials within the administration who don't appreciate the oversight role of the Councillors if you know what I'm saying. Now that is a source of conflict in our municipalities today, that's one of the reasons. So we had a similar situation in that municipality in which the Mayor and her cronies as it were they wanted to ..., or rather they instructed the Municipal Manager to award tenders to their buddies, to appoint certain officials when the woman, the Municipal Manager resisted, the whole situation resulted into factions within the institution itself. Most of us in the administration were also political, such that we couldn't escape our involvement of ourselves into those factions. In other words were part of those

factions in a sense that some of us will go with the municipal manager, will have some of the officials going with the Executive Mayor, the politicians but as well the politicians were fragmented, you had those who were supporting the Municipal Manager and you had those who were banging for her blood as it were. So that is the kind of phenomenon which you still experience even to date in our municipalities. It became kayotic such that the Municipal Manager was ultimately suspended, a bogus Council Sitting called by the Speaker and his friends, raising emotion that the Municipal Manager is suspended and everything else. They also burned her house, it was there in the news, it was kayotic Brown in that municipality even today things are just sliding to the bottom, political instability. It's not peculiar to that municipality, it's a common phenomenon, everywhere else in the country. Now that's precisely the reason why our municipalities are collapsing today, it's not mainly due to what other people refer to as cadre deployment only, to some degree it plays a role because you have some people who are actually abusing it if you know what I mean, but in the main is the politicians meddling in the affairs of the administration.

Facilitator: So eventually you got tired of it?

Respondent: Not necessarily, well look there is what is referred to as self fulfilment in life, I always knew where my passion is and currently what I'm doing is to actually pursue my passion, follow my passion. I'm a very strong character, I couldn't be pushed around by anybody if really I wanted to continue working for the municipality even to date I would still be there. Now, but I resigned mainly to pursue my passion, I always wanted to ..., I'm a revolutionary Brown, I always wanted to work for unions or a political job if you know what I'm saying and of course I landed this job in FAWU, for me it's not merely about the job, it's serving the poor workers on the ground and it gives me a challenge because in this sector workers are so much exploited Brown and the kind of challenges, exploitation and so forth which is experienced by workers in this particular sector require the character such as mine. I may sound arrogant but that's how it is anyway. You need soldiers, revolutionary soldiers, people that will confront the bosses head on without compromising – you

need someone who has a principled spirit not someone who is going to be bribed by the bosses you know what I'm saying which is a problem to some degree in our unions. You have business unionists, people who are just interested in money and everything else

Facilitator: The business unionists?

Respondent: Exactly.

Facilitator: Anyway talking about your municipality and looking at the family of the unions and all these squabbles in that municipality, what was the role of SAMWU because that is normally the local municipality, local union?

Respondent: Well you have the leaders of SAMWU local as it were, were so much patronised by members of the Council in particular the then Executive Mayor, they never wanted to confront issues that affect workers directly at production level. Instead they would choose to .., not to tackle such issues .., look I'm saying they were patronised because we heard then that some of them were earmarked for positions within the administration and all of that. But again the other factor is that these were not revolutionaries, you know politics, whether it's trade union movement politics you require revolutionaries Brown people who will tackle challenges of the workers, not just people who are shop stewards .., again I spoke about workarism remember. Now these are people that were focussing on shop floor issues but again not pushing them vigorously in the interest of the workers. So that was a problem as it were.

Facilitator: So you don't regret why you left the municipality?

Respondent: Brown I have no regrets whatsoever, in fact people will ask me, even my close buddies they would say "Oupa but why have you left Mchana, that's government, job security and so forth, why did you leave and so forth". I will always tell them that passion is important in life you must do what you enjoy, for me fighting oppression, fighting capitalism, that's my passion I'm a revolutionary, I don't have any regrets. I anticipate working for the unions for ever and ever amen. Here I'm paid by the workers, there's no patronage now, I'm directly paid by the workers and I like it, I appreciate it. For so long as workers are being oppressed I think I will be in the unions or die a unionist like many of our fore bearers, Chris Dlamini, Ray Alexander Simons and so many others who served the trade union movement with passion, with diligence if you know what I'm saying.

Facilitator: And how did you end up here then in FAWU, in particular Nelspruit?

Respondent: Well I saw an advert on the internet, it stated clearly that the post is in Nelspruit, I applied taking into account all those implications of relocating etc., well I was shortlisted, called for the interviews .., by the way I was interviewed amongst others by the National Deputy Secretary, something which I didn't expect, but I was always ready brown, they would ask me questions that related to the Labour Law and everything else, which I think to some degree I'm a guru, and they asked me questions about politics in general, of course I'm a proud Communist, very proud, so I've done very well during the interviews. I had no doubt that if justice or fairness is anything to go by, I would be taken. I had no doubt whatsoever.

Facilitator: So you came in as an organiser?

Respondent: I was appointed of course as the Provincial Organiser deployed here in Nelspruit.

Facilitator: And your impression of FAWU when you came in here?

Respondent: Well, I think .., well I wouldn't expect FAWU to be the FAWU of yester year, I'm a firm believer in the law of development that things develop into quantity and of course into quality, things don't remain the same forever. Now the historical background of FAWU is that it was led by the Communist initially, during a different terrain of the struggle if you like, they've made their contribution and of course they are gone. Those are our fore bearers, tribute to them. Now FAWU today for me, it hasn't improved so much like we would ordinarily expect because by the way this is an old union, established back in 1944. At this stage I would expect FAWU to be one of the biggest affiliates of COSATU, not just in history but even in membership if you like. Though there are many factors which affect this particular situation that I've just described Brown, one is the kind of sectors in which we are organising, exploitation, exploitation, we're organising farm workers here, we are organising the hospitality industry which is also very much exploiting our own members/workers. Now for me, FAWU I've just scanned the environment within FAWU and I can just sum it up by saying FAWU requires, needs revolutionaries, not just people who are working, people who need money, people who perceive what they are doing as jobs. It doesn't require such people, it needs revolutionaries, because challenges that face workers on daily basis they are so much that you require a different approach in ..(unclear) them.

Facilitator: Have you succeeded to organise farm workers because I'm told that it's difficult to recruit from the farms because of the bosses and so on?

Respondent: I think we are not doing well Brown if truth be told. We know exactly what is required of us to do, both as FAWU and as COSATU, there are joint programmes which we've agreed upon together with COSATU nationally and in the province, we have reaffirmed some resolutions, for instance we just came from a COSATU Congress on 21st and 22nd of June in the province and we had to reaffirm that we need to carry our programmes forward in respect to the agricultural sector

and farming, in particular recruitment because COSATU as a federation has it's own plan, 2015 plan, among other things in relation to 2015 plan is the recruitment of members, in particular in these sectors that are organised by FAWU, so far there isn't improvement, the situation is never encouraging but we just said that we will do something with COSATU in the province.

Facilitator: Earlier on you mentioned the fact that within FAWU are workarists?

Respondent: Not necessarily within FAWU but within COSATU, within all affiliates if you like and FAWU is no exception. So that is for me, that is the challenge for many of us as revolutionaries. Like we said Brown, we are negotiating for workers on a daily basis, wages, improved working conditions and so forth. Now, we need to take into account the fact that the struggles of workers in the workers in the workplace, struggles for waiting they can be traced at the point of production. The combination of workers and the bosses and their interest thereof which are quite in conflict, now this particular point is never appreciated by the workarist, workarist believe that no when you demand 18% from the bosses they will just give you 18% you must just fight and fight you will get 18%. They don't appreciate other struggles, for instance to say but at the point of production, the power relations, why are we workers, why are these bosses. The kind of distinct interest that we're pursuing as a result they just get trapped in the offices, reporting on duty from 8 to 4 going away, there are no campaigns, workarist don't appreciate campaigns outside the union, campaigns that are going to flag the kind of issues or challenges that affect workers on a daily basis. Workarist don't link trade union struggles with the political and economy struggle which is faced by workers on a daily basis. So that is quite problematic, but for us as revolutionaries, we are quite conversant of the fact that in fact, Marx made a point about unions and their role in the workplace. Marx and Lenin in the Capital ..(unclear) about price, profit, he says that trade union struggles, whether won or lost they are not going to change the structure of society. Now we are inspired by this Brown, what it says is in other words is that you didn't unions deal mainly with issues on the surface, issues which are shallow but the crux of the issue that affect workers are at the point of production, it's a class struggle in other words,

now for us as revolutionaries we are so much concerned about that than mere shop floor issues, wages if you like, yes.

Facilitator: And the country's labour laws do you think they are good enough for the market, meaning workers in terms of the market?

Respondent: Well it's an interesting question in the sense that of course there are opposing views in the market out there, depending on the political divide in which you belong, we have the bosses who are bemoaning our labour laws saying that they are rigid, and so forth and so forth. They're actually a stumbling block to us, job creation and what have you, but for us unions, the revolutionaries we strongly believe that labour laws instead they have to be strengthened further such that they are able to protect workers from exploitation by the bosses. For instance an issue which is before parliament today and I'm aware that parliament is currently crisscrossing the country conducting public hearings on the issue of labour broking. The amendment bill there says that you can only work 6 months but after 6 months you will be regarded as a permanent worker, meaning that for that 6 months it's well and good for you to be exploited by that labour broker and so forth. The bosses obviously are opposed to that. In fact they want the retention of the labour brokers in full, meanwhile we're not happy with that section of the amendment bill, instead you need a total ban of the labour brokers because clearly that's we regard as the modern day slavery which reactionary organisations such as Afri Forum for instance they are contemplating taking us to court that we shouldn't use that phrase but that's how it is anyway, we want to fight them big time, we're not turning back. For us we are in the revolution.

Facilitator: But in terms of labour brokers in the case of FAWU, have they dented FAWU?

Respondent: Ja well, look in this particular sector/industry in which we organise, it is given that you will have a lot of labour broking, for instance in one of the companies in which we organise, which is Coca Cola, labour broking is there and of course in other companies. So we are confronted with challenges of labour broking in the sector, quite a lot ja.

Facilitator: So that has cost you some numbers in some ways in FAWU?

Respondent: Not numbers per se, remember, we are also recruiting workers that get employed by the labour brokers, it's a pity they extend to which we negotiate on their behalf is quite limited. You go to Coca Cola, we are negotiating with Coca Cola for Coca Cola workers but for labour broking it becomes difficult. But of course these are our members, now we anticipate a situation on which you will have no labour broking at all because clearly reasons are quite known as to why we don't need labour broking, the middle man, no benefits, no provident fund, they just give you your money as it is you go away. The next thing you die there's no .., you get buried like a pauper. That kind of a situation has to stop Brown, that is why we don't want labour broking, they are just exploiting, and that's it, we don't buy into a notion that they are creating jobs and so forth, look we are concerned about the job creation as a union but the notion of job creation as a priority as well needs to be balanced with working conditions which are good for our own workers, we shouldn't be just focussing on job creation at the expense of our own members it can't be true.

Facilitator: What are some of the challenges of FAWU in this province, what needs to be done in 5 to 10 years?

Respondent: Well look the main challenge in this province of FAWU is recruitment. You have farms all over the place here in Nelspruit, farms in which workers are not organised and it's many many farms here, so for us that is a challenge, it's a

challenge because look we are running now 18 years into our democracy, what it says essentially is that you have workers who don't know about the notion of freedom and the benefits thereof. Bosses are exploiting our own members. (unclear) organise, that's one example but what about in those farms in which workers are never unionised, it's a big challenge for us. In the main the challenge is recruitment and recruitment, we need to get more members into FAWU in order to avoid or to prevent exploitation of workers that are staying in those areas who are working on farms but of course more workers into FAWU means more growth in terms of the organisation. More members means the union is growing, the capacity building and thereof and so forth and so forth. So it's quite an important issue that we are pursuing quite vigorously. We are recruiting on a daily basis but of course there's a colleague of ours who has been employed specifically to focus on recruitment. So we are quite serious about that particular factor.

Facilitator: And on the whole the future of COSATU?

Respondent: Look, COSATU will be in existence for many years to come, for so long as there is gross exploitation of workers in this country, in the farms, in the hospitality industry, in the mines and everywhere else, COSATU will remain relevant. You know what makes COSATU to remain more relevant is precisely because at least in terms of what it stands for politically it's ..(unclear) to the policy of socialism, despite the kind of challenges which I related previously in our conversation that we have comrades within COSATU who haven't grasped the whole ideology of the workers as to why we belong to the ANC, why we belong to the SACP and so forth, despite all of that COSATU will remain relevant for so long as workers are exploited, then COSATU will be around for many many years to come. Look you talk about affiliates of COSATU, they are quite strong, in each sector in which they organise, we talk about NUMSA, NUMSA is quite strong in the metal industry, you talk about NUM, despite these banana unions, we call them banana, which are mushrooming, NUM remains relevant. In the whole industry you have mushrooming unions and other individuals who claim to be representing workers but we remain relevant. Our history and what we stand for politically and in terms of the union work that's what makes

us relevant, we have programmes, we have campaigns, living wage campaigns and so forth and so forth. All those combined make COSATU relevant.

Facilitator: And if you were to be born again and grow up again would you still be a unionist or would you do something different?

Respondent: Look Brown in fact I pray that I die being a unionist, I die and get buried being a unionist. I don't anticipate myself turning into something else in future. Look I've actually .., by taking part in trade union politics and in the mainstream politics, look for me I've crossed the Rubicon. I know as to why I'm in politics, I know exactly as to why I'm in the unions. Like I said for me, what I'm doing here is not a job, what FAWU is paying me I just regard that as something that needs to sustain me everyday, to buy soap so that I can wash, to move from one post to the other servicing workers, for me I regard myself as a servant of the workers. So those are my strong values in terms of trade union work. I really can't imagine Oupa Msiza being something else, I can't, in fact if people were killed for being unionist I would be the first volunteer and say "kill me". I'm a firm believer in freedom, I hate exploitation so much.

Facilitator: Your involvement in politics has it affected your social life somehow?

Respondent: Ja definitely, look some of us in politics we don't do well in terms of our social life, particularly as it relates to families and so forth which is why politicians sometimes they .., for whatever reason it may be they get divorced and all of that because we live for the struggle. I can tell you I spent most of my time doing political work, apart from union work here in FAWU, I'm an activist of the SACP, of course I'm an activist of the ANC, now, my family is a political family, is SACP, is COSATU, so we spent most of our time doing political work. So that in itself does have an impact on our social life. Well we do hang around with comrades socially so you know, we do mix with a whole range of people in our lives but in the main of

course it's comrades, when we socialise it will be Oupa socialising with other comrades, if for instance it's a drinking session, it will be a drinking session of comrades if you know what I'm saying.

Facilitator: Is there anything else that is important maybe which should have been part of this interview?

Respondent: I'm not sure but for me Brown is that the whole element of linking worker struggles with political and economic struggle is quite paramount and I so wish that other unionists, the level of the office bearers, shop stewards, organisers should consider this particular factor because it is quite important. There is no way in which you going to win the battle against the ruthless bosses out there if you are willing to merely focus on petty issues if you like, these are petty issues, important but petty as well if you consider the broader struggle that we seek to pursue as the working class as a whole ja. And ja, well, look the ..(unclear) contraventions in COSATU with some of them they are being distorted by newspapers and so forth, well for us are important but as well what combines COSATU or what makes COSATU united is actually our struggle against the bosses. You have NUMSA, you have FAWU, you have NUM, and so forth and so forth, our orientation is quite different. I know well, FOSATU has an element of .., a contingent of comrades who historically are coming from FOSATU you find them in NUM for instance, so our orientation is quite diverse but at least there's an appreciation that the goal is one, the objective is one.

Facilitator: Any closing word.

Respondent: Well we will encourage our own members to rally behind our own programmes, programmes of FAWU, programmes of COSATU which seek to liberate the workers themselves, that is quite important. Workers struggles are not going to be won in the boardrooms, in the offices, but they are going to be won in the streets,

there's no way in which employers are going to surrender or just give their profits, share their profits with workers willy nilly, that is not possible, now we need activists within our own organisation, we need revolutionaries, people that will appreciate the struggles of the workers on a daily basis. So for us that is quite important.

Facilitator: Thanks very much for your time mfowethu it was wonderful.

Respondent: Thanks

END

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