

ZANDILE NKOSI

Facilitator: This is an interview with Ms Zandile Nkosi, we are in Kwa-Thema, the date is the 29th of March 2012, and the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Cde Nkosi thank you very much for your time, we can speak in Zulu, English or mix. Just give me your family background, how you were raised, family background, schooling and how you ended up in the unions.

Respondent: I was born and bred here is no. 11 Masinga Street Kwa-Thema, and I studied Piwe Thwala in lower primary and Sakhelwe in higher primary, I went to high school in Tlapula and I went to Mamelo Nqabeni where I finished Grade 11, that was Standard 9 at that time. I went to Phone Efficiency for a secretarial course; I have at Macoleave as a receptionist. Then when at Macoleave were looking for men as receptionists I left and found a job at Jabula Foods. I was employed as a packer in Jabula, at the time they employed us they had fired four hundred workers because they were in a illegal strike, so we were employed as women, but previously they didn't hire women they hired men, so we were the first group of women to be hired at Jubula Food, it was a new era. At that time I was 25 years and wanted us to carry big bales like 90kg and we were paid R74 a week, I could see this was not right. Fortunately enough the personnel that was there, Sam Ngema, was a relative of some kind here at home because his wife was a cousin to my cousin. So I approached him to say that the working conditions were not conducive and maybe that might be the reason why there were people who were fired, they were fired because of these poor conditions of employment. So I then said to him that I wanted to introduce a union because it will protect our interests because the answers I got from him were not satisfactory to me, he said I was a worker and I had no right to speak anyhow.

Fortunately enough I lived in Kwa-Thema in Tornado, then I was approached by Rusty Moage, he came here at home, he knew me through Thabo Mphe whose family had shops here in the area. Normally when I come back from home I would go to the shops to get stuff to prepare lunch for the following day at Jabula Foods, so Rusty approached me, came here at home, he asked me if I knew why those people were fired at Jabula Foods, I told him I didn't, he explained that they were unfairly treated, I told him that within three months I had already see and realized that people were unfairly treated, and I have approached personnel, Sam because he is a relative here at home, but he said I must work or leave if I am not satisfied. Rusty asked me if I was brave enough, I told him that I was and they must give me the forms. Then I went back to Sam Ngema, I told him that I was recruiting and he asked what I was recruiting for, I told him I was recruiting for Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union, that was the union at that time, he told me that Sweet Food was not the correct union, it was better to go with one that was under NACTWU because Sweet Food was a union of the people that were there. I told him that I would go and check objectives and policies of Sweet Food and he must also give me objectives and police of the one he says is the right one and compare, I wanted to check because in the beginning he had said he is siding with management so I could not trust that he was going to give me correct information, maybe he was going to give me the very same thing that made those people get fired or he was going to give me something that will leave me unfairly treated.

The department I was in was for women was where we packed soups and then the heavy department where I didn't want to go and work because they were carrying heavy bales of mealie meal, 90kg, and I was very thin at that time, 90kg weighed more than I did at that time, I

said no, women cannot work in that department. The CF department that worked men had Zulu and Isipedi speaking people, but most people who were fired were Isipedi speaking. So when they saw that I have already conscientised people in the packing department and the drivers who mostly were Isipedi speaking, they felt that their people were fired unfairly. It is then we said we were going to fight. Sam started to influence the Zulu speaking people to join UWUSA which was under Inkatha, because they were Zulus. So he started to be tribalistic and said the Zulu's cannot join a union that is not theirs, he said their culture didn't allow them to be led by a woman, by a young woman for that matter, he said Zandile was a young girl and cannot lead Zulu men. So we started to have discussions around that, we then did a secrete ballot to determine which union we will recognize, whether UWUSA or Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union. We lost the first voting round, and we lost because we didn't see that management was on UWUSA's side, and the instrument which were in place at that time were conducive for UWUSA to vote freely, because they would transport them from the hostel in buses to go and vote and we didn't see that they were transported by the company. Because we worked in shifts, 2-10 and 10-6, those who worked 10-6 were not able to vote, that is how we lost the first voting round.

Then the regional EC of Sweet Food said these people won the vote on technicality, then they met with me and told me that I should go and ask for by-elections under the reason that the company took sides and the gave me a lot other points I can put forward to make my case. I went back and requested by-elections from management, they asked my why I wanted by-elections, I told them that we have proof that buses were taking people from the hostel and other taxis who were taking people from the township belonged to one of them, Simon Magagula who was a member of UWUSA and had big influence in taxi

drivers so they can carry people free of charge because the company was going to pay. They agreed to by-elections, Sweet Food won the by-elections and we got the recognition agreement.

When Sweet Food got the recognition agreement then I was elected as a full time shop steward, in fact I am first black woman to be a shop steward in a labour movement, so I was elected as a full time shop steward. UWUSA together with management never gave up; they started assassinating the executive committee of shop stewards.

Facilitator: Killing them?

Respondent: Yes, killing them. The Chairperson of the Shop steward Committee was Moses Ntuli, he used to work shifts, we were on the run at that time, the police were after us and we were not secured with management. Fortunately they didn't know where I lived because when Inkatha had just killed Moses, they were told that they killed the wrong person, the person they should have killed was me because I was more influential, they killed someone just because they lived with him in the hostel, so they shot and killed Moses, he was the Chairperson. After Moses died, we planned to go to Siyabuswa to his funeral, when we arrived in Siyabuswa there were more police than the people who attended the funeral. After I had finished to do the speech the night before during the wake, there were (unclear) and everything, luckily the women who were cooking said I must hide under them and their blankets because they had identified that I was wearing a tracksuit and that I had hips, they sat on top of me and then they undressed my tracksuit and gave me their clothes, then they said I must go out because the police were going to come back again and check them, so I went out with other old ladies, fortunately enough there were cars nearby owned by their sons, they moved me from one

place to another until I reached a place where I could be transported home, people left there were shot at, tear gassed and arrested, fortunately enough no one died in that incident.

When we came back people had been arrested. The whole of East Rand and the firms in Springs said they were not going back to work if the Cdes from Jabula Foods were not released. At that time in Siyabuswa, the magistrate was Cde Mahlangu; he was working together with Imbokodo for women. So when Imbokodo embarked on that strike for (unclear), it was during the time the people from Jabula Foods were arrested. So Mahlangu approached Chris and our intelligence, because those people who were arrested could be poisoned or worse, Mahlangu said they must go to court, when they arrived in court he released them all and said he didn't see any cause why they were arrested. We were not aware that we were dealing with a Cde, Mahlangu was a comrade all along. When they came back, at that time I was a victim, they said there is a problem because your family was not safe, my mother, father and siblings were also not safe because the police were coming to our house as they pleased.

I was working shifts on weekends if I wasn't attending meetings. It was on Monday afternoon, I was supposed to do a shift in the men's department, if they called you to come and work a shift it didn't matter whether you were a shop steward or not. In the morning my parents had asked me whether I was going to go and do a shift at night in a department that was not mine, I told them that I was going to go because at the end of the day it was my job. I used to listen to everything my father told me, he told me that I was not going to go to work that day so I ended up not going, actually three of us didn't go that day. That day apparently in the department we were supposed to go and work in, they had set a trap of dust and electricity, when the

people that I was supposed to go and do the shift with there was a blast and they all burnt and all 25 of them died. The three of us who did not go to work were saved, the intention was to kill me. There was an inquest and they found that the firm was dirty and Sweet Foods send their own investigators and they found that it was a trap, they found that you cannot take electricity and mix it with dust, of course it will cause an explosion, that report is available at Sweet Foods even today. So after Moses was killed, it was war now, comrades died in the firm and those who lived in the hostel. My only security place, because they were looking for me in the township, it was the hostel where they came from, so the Isipedi speaking comrades divided their room then said I must stay there, while they look for me in the township I will be staying there with them, that is how I was safe. They harassed my family and friends, others were killed but they could not find me in the township and they didn't know where I was. There was a time where they killed another Cde from Natal just because he joined Sweet Food, they killed him in the hostel, and we decided that it was now enough. We went to management and told them that the labour war they started in Jabula Foods, they must stop it, we gave them ten days, and we told them if they don't stop it then they will see a battlefield inside Jabula Foods. They killed this one guy from Natal, we had agreed that we were going to elect him as a shop steward, it was merely to the reaction of the shop steward committee. I used to do shifts, either 8am or 5pm or 2am because I didn't them to know my routine, so when I started came in, my father used to drop me off over the railway line and I would then walk up the gate through the security and once inside I would know that I was safe because the comrades were always ready for anything because people were killing each other, so I was protected by the Cdes.

When we heard that the guy had been killed, we said they were not going to enter the gates of Jabula Foods, we were going to finish them outside the gate. At Jabula Foods there were forks that were used to mix all these soups and other things. So the consensus was that we go out to the gate with these forks when they arrive at 6am, unfortunately they only found one person when they went out with the forks, they killed him. When police arrived and asked the security, security said they didn't see anything, the security were members of the union, so after that man was killed then there were less killings happening, although it didn't stop it outside, because we were not safe outside. It was decided that the Zulus must be chased away and bring in people from the township, because we had power to do that as shop steward. We went to the management together with Chris, we told them that we don't want Sam Ngema there anymore, he was fired, and then Peter Mkhonto was hired in HR. Premier milling sent Neo Makutwane at that time to come and fix things, Neo told me that they sent him to me, he said they want to know what will be the best for workers, I said they must not send him to me because I was not the union, they should have sent him to Sweet Food and not me. They removed Neo because he was older and sent Arthur Mzimela, he was a bit older than me, with the intention that I would get into a relationship with Arthur, but they found that I was not into those things. He told them that the strategy was not going to work with me. Arthur worked for six months and left, their strategy failed.

So we decided that in order to secure the jobs of people working at Jabula Foods, so that they don't hire other people, we added a clause in the recognition agreement that anybody who worked at Jabula Foods will be under FAWU, and then we merged with other unions, so we were not Sweet Food any longer but Food and Allied Workers Union. Then there was a close shop agreement in the recognition

agreement that everyone who will be hired at Jabula Foods will be a member of FAWU. It is then I started to employ of people from the township, but in order to have control, 65% of the people I employed were from Tornado, for my and their security reasons so that no one gets killed. In Tornado we grew up as one big family, so this was a way to make sure that we help each other and if we don't get along then our parents get involved to make sure that we do what is needed.

It went on and the management influenced some of the workers and I left to work for the union.

Facilitator: Interesting story. Just to go back a bit, before you worked in Jabula Foods, you said that you went to work at Macoleave as a receptionist, was there no union there.

Respondent: There was no union at that time.

Facilitator: And the problem was that they didn't want a female receptionist?

Respondent: At that time Macoleave came to me and said that because there were many orders for men that come in here, they no longer wanted a female receptionist. I said why a male receptionist, he said in Post Offices men are working in the front, you remember that telecommunication at that time was by men, the telephone exchange was done by men. So I didn't beg them, I didn't care much, I didn't any responsibility at home, so I decided to leave before they fired me.

Facilitator: In terms of school before you started looking for a job, were you pressed to go and look for work or you decided that you wanted to work?

Respondent: Our culture here at home was that my father didn't want to send girls to school, he grew up in Swaziland, and he said he was not going to educate girls. That is the reason why I had a child at 24 years, I didn't want a child or anything else I wanted to go to school, he said no because after we finish school we will go get married and another family will benefit from my education. He took my brothers and raised them in Swaziland, he also raised me culturally, all the rituals from Swaziland were done for me, and so he didn't want me to go to school. He said I passed a Diploma for Secretary, what else did I want? Fortunately enough, in Sweet Foods and FAWU we had classes where we were trained by people from Wits, Industrial Relations, that is my field. We got certificates at that time, we also got the labour relations from Wits lecturers. If I can get Rusty he can tell you the names of the people who trained us from Wits.

Facilitator: Phil Bonner?

Respondent: Yes, Phil Bonner was one of them. As you know it was under Apartheid regime, there was nothing that we could have done at that time. But it's just that girls were not sent to school at home, so everything else I have I did on my own. My father just didn't was to send me to school. Then I was employed by NACTWU.

Facilitator: After your experience at Jabula Foods?

Respondent: Yes after Jabula Foods.

Facilitator: So you decided to go to NACTWU, why didn't you go to FAWU?

Respondent: The reason why I didn't join FAWU, the people who were next to me politically were AZAPO people, at the time the ideology of the people of Black Consciousness and the ideology of the ANC, it was not in the limelight at that time because the ANC was banned, and AZAPO was active in the sense that, you know that I like education, AZAPO was exposed because you would find people like Bobo from Khumalo Street, after they saw that I was strong and I was active, they said people from here cannot leave and go work somewhere else. With internal problems that were there in FAWU, they were male chauvinists, they saw me as just a woman and they could not be dominated by a woman. I have principles, if you give me an opportunity to learn, after I have learned I stick to those principles, it's not easy to change me from what you taught me, the freedom and independence Chris and others gave me, they could not change me from that so that they can manipulate me when it suits them, so there were those tensions there.

There were no women who had the experience I had from Jabula Foods, NACTWU took that opportunity because they saw that if you work with a woman you work with someone who is reliable. The post was advertised, then we were employed, there were two of us, in fact I was qualified for the Secretary position, then in the interview they said my strength was not to become a Secretary but my strength was to be an organizer, then they said to me that because the other candidate is female and she wanted the reception position, you can also see that she is qualified as well for the reception position. They put us in the same room and I also saw that she really qualified to be a reception. Then they called me and asked if I was comfortable to be an organizer, I say yes, so I was the national organizer of NACTWU.

Facilitator: The chauvinism within FAWU, was it not easy to solve the matter, was it difficult.

Respondent: It was difficult because at that time people in FAWU treated Chris like he was a God, and I understood that we were all equal as shop stewards, as I was a full time shop steward at and he was a full time shops ward at Kelloggs, I brought in 2000 members and he brought 180 members. Then if we have to talk about who works more than the other, I am talking about a solid 2000 membership.

Facilitator: From Jabula Foods?

Respondent: Yes from Jabula Foods. Rusty Moage and I were the best because Rusty also brought 2000 members from Ivan and Johnson, we elected him to be president but it didn't mean he must dictate to us. Just because he was the first one to recruit and mobilize us, they took him as a God, I told him that I do not have a God there, we were all equal and there was no policy that stated that there are people superior to others, we were all equal. There was resistance to the change, they didn't want a young woman like me to come and lead them, I told them they were not happy when Inkatha people said the same thing about me, but now they are the ones saying exactly the same statement. I told them I was not going to change, this is me and nothing is going to change about who I am. I told them that it means what they taught me was a lie, what were the families of the people who died for this struggle going to say when they hear them talking like that, it means that I betrayed them because they died fighting your cause. I told them that they had lost a lot of membership at Jabula Foods but they were lucky to find an instrument that is me to drive their cause.

We removed Chris because he was problematic and he was going to stop progress in the union, he went to become a Deputy Chairperson in FOSATU and worked with people like Bharayi, he will fit in there, we did this strategically and he agreed, he didn't know that we were removing him from us so we can work in peace. The people who were left behind were all the same, there was no one who was going to claim that they have been with the union for a long time. At that time Kelloggs was the strongest company in the union, even us at Jabula Foods if it wasn't for the rivalry that existed we would have been the strongest, hence Premier Milling decided to close down and sell because they couldn't control the people at Jabula Foods.

Facilitator: How were the conditions of employment in Jabula Foods?

Respondent: When I was still at Jabula Foods employment was controlled by us as shop stewards.

Facilitator: When you took over as the first shop steward, what needed to be done there?

Respondent: We checked whether one, they had fired four hundred people before us.

Facilitator: Four hundred, that's the whole factory.

Respondent: Yes everyone, I think there were only ten people left and only because they had sick notes. Because I had been trained, we decided to check the organogram to see what the plan of Premier Milling was, how many people they had wanted to hire and why a job that is supposed to be done by 2000 is done by 400 people, then we said to management let's fill up the gaps, then we started to create

jobs, because at that time we were not really looking for people with matric or other skills, as long as the person was able to work was enough. My argument with matric was that what is it that they will do differently if they have matric, the only thing that was needed was that they carry bags around unless they are required to use a forklift, and even then on their business plan they said they want to plough back to the people, so they must take people and train them to use a forklift, we said they must also train the ones that have been there longer than ten years, who were not affected, they must train them to become foremen, not only give the foreman jobs to whites, I told them I didn't care about their white superiority, they must train black people who have been here for a long time.

Facilitator: Did the working conditions improve overtime?

Respondent: Our recognition agreement with Premier Milling was a very good because we were not bargaining with Jabula Foods, we were bargaining with Premier Milling as a whole.

Facilities: The position of the women in Jabula Foods, you were the first black woman to be a shop steward, maternity leave and other needs, were they attended to (unclear).

Respondent: Fortunately enough I was the first one to become pregnant, because I was clued up I went to the UIF before the recognition agreement was reached, and asked them if you work in a factory and you are pregnant what are you supposed to do, they said you are supposed to fill in forms so that you can get paid, I took that form and gave it to Sam and told him that at UIF they said if you are pregnant you are supposed to get maternity leave and the company must fill the form so that I can get paid. They said I was not going to

get three months maternity leave but only one month, I said I don't care but I must just get paid. Fortunately I delivered my child in December so I didn't even need that one month maternity leave because there were rumours that they wanted to fire me, so I went back before they planned firing me, when the firm opened in the second week of January because my mother was there to look after my baby and I went back to work, but I was given maternity leave. When we started negotiations then it became a package because there were women in the factory, if they were not going to agree we would have gone on strike and fought for it until they gave in. We had maternity leave, we had compassionate leave for men which was ten days, because we were mixed, males and females, and you know when at a firm people are mixed like that at the end others get married, its normal.

Facilitator: And in terms of benefits at work, did you have benefits?

Respondent: We had 13th cheque after the recognition agreement with Premier milling, but before there was nothing, there was not even compensation when people were injured at work.

Facilitator: Talking about issues of compensation when people are injured in the work place, what is a safe place there?

Respondent: Our department was a safe place because we were packing soups and there was a machine, it was not that hazardous, but other departments like CF where you climb very high and carry a 90kg bag, that was not safe, and also at mooiplant it was not safe because there as well they had to climb up when they doing the liquor, climb steps with the big bags, so it was not safe at all.

Facilitator: So were there people who were injured because of those circumstances?

Respondent: Yes there were but we had a doctor, nurse and a sister on site, but it was not conducive enough because if you are injured you must go to the hospital. The nurse and sister doing first aid wouldn't treat you the way they would do in hospital, and there was no medical aid and because we were earning little salary we could not afford medical aid.

Facilitator: Are there any people who got sick after having worked there for twenty or thirty years, who have after effects?

Respondent: There were especially those who worked with dust, there will always be after effects when you are working with dust. I had already left Jabula when I heard that Mahenyele took over that place, my suspicion was that Premier Milling ran away from the responsibility because people who worked there were there for many years, even those that had left when we were hired were also old, so I suspected that Mahenyele didn't know what he was buying, he probably told himself that he was a BEE partner, that so called BEE that existed at that time, they bought him Jabula Foods, or Premier Milling just gave him a ghost company and we was to see to finish what he does with the people in it. As a result when I meet people that I used to work with in Jabula Foods, they are not fit at all, its unfortunate because I left and went to live in Mpumalanga for twenty years, and its only been six months since I have been back, but when I meet them you can see that these people are not healthy, even if they were to find a job they would not be able to work.

Facilitator: Issues of overtime, did you work overtime, was it paid for?

Respondent: Yes, we had overtime but we didn't want to do it, we didn't want to overwork ourselves, but they paid it. My approach was we will do that overtime now at twenty four years, then by the time we reach fifty years we will be messed up because of that overtime. They paid us but they taxed the amount, the money you worked for overtime you would find that maybe it was R20 and you find that tax you R6 and you took a taxi charging you R5, so that means that twelve hours you worked is only R11. I used to tell Cdes that overtime is nonsense, it's a waste, it just takes a toll on your body. I would tell them that here in packing all we do is open the machine and these things get into the packets, whereas they carry big heavy bags.

Facilitator: Did you ever go on strike at Jabula Foods for other issues?

Respondent: Yes. One was for the recognition agreement and the second for wages.

Facilitator: Once, twice or all the time in terms of striking over wages?

Respondent: After we had fought and made a lot of noise and Neo Makutwane and Arthur Mzimela had given up, Premier Milling, Peter Wright who was a major shareholder, he saw that they were losing, he sent Bahan, I don't know whether he was Indian or a Somalian, when I look at these Somalians because I didn't know what they look like at that time, Bahan looks like them. Bahan said he was not going to fight with me, in fact I had even defeated the bargaining council from Premier Milling. When we go to their wage negotiations, they would provide sandwiches for lunch, I would tell them that I can't eat sandwiches during lunch, I am used to eat vetkoeks and mangol, because this is what the people that they are refusing to pay eat. At lunch time there would be a car going out to look for a skop (sheep's

head) because that's what I could afford for what they pay me. So Premier Milling and Peter Wright, he said how could they expect my colleagues to reason if I cannot reason. When they arrive there they found that there were vetkoeks being sold and mongol and skop, I told them I will not eat sandwiches because that's not what I am used to, I don't know cheese, I can't afford to buy it, what if I get sick from eating stuff I don't know. Peter Wright talked to Bahan, apparently Bahan was experienced in solving problems like these, Bahan said to me he didn't want to fight with me, he said I must give him a details list of what we want and he will go to Peter Wright and the board and tell them what is available in the coughers of Premier Milling and then he will come back to me and then we take it from there, he said he didn't want a mess, he wanted a smooth operation. I said ok.

I don't know the person who was doing research based on margin profit made by companies, especially Premier Milling, I have forgotten his name, so we went there together with Rusty and then the person said Jabula Foods had made profit, something like R100 000 that year. So when Bahan came back from Peter Wright, they said the company had not made profit it had a deficit, I told him that you had said you and I should not fight, I told him that the company had made profit of this amount, I produced the paper which had proof of how much profit they had made, I told them to take it back to Peter Wright to tell him that I did my research and I know that they made profit. So Bahan said to Peter Wright I told you not to underestimate this woman, so he came back and asked how much we wanted, at that time we wanted R20 across the board, we were not talking in percentages then. The following year, there was a national resolution from FAWU that said the R20 was little because there was inflation to consider and there are other things outside of Premier Milling, we were also learning because they were training us as shop stewards, we learnt that they cannot pay

us less than the inflation rate. They said they didn't use the inflation rate because they were not government, it was the time when FOSATU was in the tripartite alliance with the ANC although it was underground. They said they were not government, if we are talking about inflation go and talk to government, we said government is their buddies, they must go talk to them to lower the inflation, because when we get our salaries going to pay they tell us about inflation, so we don't have a spokesperson, because they have a spokesperson in the National Party they should go and speak to them. A lot of boycotts would happen when I was arrested and people would say they are not going to work and also when they had killed someone (unclear), most strikes were based on violence.

Facilitator: But you succeeded in most of these strikes.

Respondent: Yes we succeeded, we were strong and united.

Facilitator: Did you succeed to chase out UWUSA in Jabula Foods?

Respondent: Yes we succeeded.

Facilitator: So after that there were no problems?

Respondent: Yes, in fact we were one big happy family. We hired people from the township and we understood each other, if we had a problem we could not solve in the factory, we would meet in the township and talk about it and tell the person where they went wrong. The thing of hearings for people who didn't go to work or went to work drunk, we started them in the township, we would tell the person that you are drunk and you are not going to work. We also stopped this

thing of sick notes, if you are drunk just phone your foreman and tell him that you cannot go to work on that day, you will come tomorrow.

Facilitator: The kind of disciplinary cases that you went through, were they fair to the workers?

Respondent: Whether they were fair or not the way I was so trained and the way the workers were so trained, the company wouldn't succeed with any dismissal of any employee, the way they were so trained they wouldn't be able to try anything. For instance, if the security was a member of the union, who was going to arrest a person who stole at the gate, and if the foremen were the members the union, who was going to discipline that worker. So the task of the shop stewards was to conscientise the workers and tell them that we were there for profit and commission and that the company survives and makes profit so that we can get better salaries and provide for your children, there was no need to come to work drunk or steal because the company will end up closed. We had self discipline and that made the lives of management very easy. At some stage management would lend money to workers, there was a financial manager who would loan workers money, then take it from their pay, he was a loan shark. Then I discovered that, I asked whether they borrowed money. I went straight to management and told them that there was a person who lent workers money, and he takes it from their pay, and it was illegal to open someone's salary without their permission, they said they didn't know anything about it. We trapped him, our department was full of people like me, with a screw loose, I asked them to go and borrow money, they did. On Wednesday when we got paid he opened their salaries and I told them to take them back, I called the Managing Director, these envelopes had been opened and they had slips inside that said the company lent them

money, all these people want their full salaries. (unclear) they had taken R600 and it was a lot of money then. So we were united, then when we see that this white person is problem, we deal with it.

Facilitator: Was racism ever an issue at Jabula Foods?

Respondent: Racism was there, but at the time we worked there, our foreman was Mr. Olivier, because we were many women in that department, he couldn't take it and resigned. Through the pressure from the solidarity from us and the union, the white people that were racist were let go, when they let go a white person we would replace him with a Black person. White people were only in the admin block, they didn't often come to our departments, if they do come we would start singing and they would see that the signing was directed at them. We were very into politics and the struggle because we had lost a lot of people, and there was no point of turning back, we could see that we can be victims because nobody was sure that UWUSA would not kill us and the white people would not work with UWUSA again, because at no given stage you were going to join white people's union as a Black person. So we were able to intimidate the white people.

Facilitator: So when you joined NACTWU from FAWU and so on which was ANC aligned, and now you were going to a PAC aligned union. Didn't this issue bring you problems?

Respondent: It didn't bring problems per se. the way I was working, it was like I was paying revenge to FAWU. The pace I was working in, organizing and starting branches, organizing affiliates and starting branches here in East Rand. In twelve months there was like 15 unions around this place, I was approached by Cyril and Rusty who said that

they didn't educate me in order to kill FOSATU and go work for another union. I told them I was hired and that's why I was working.

At that time BCM was very slow and the pace I was moving on was very fast, they said there was a problem, they used me as a fire extinguisher. They said because I had started some branches, they said there was a problem with SACTWU, they knew that I had an attitude towards white people. In SACTWU there was John Koplin who was a Secretary, SACTWU was for (unclear) more than political issues. Even in labour, it was not labour which is controlled by the workers, there was those bargaining unions that were created by SACTWU, although they were legal but were biased because if a person was fired, the matter didn't have balance. So they said to me I must go there because I was able to fix things that were none of my concern. In NACTWU we agree that ideology, this and that, I said that I needed labour forums because if I was going to go and talk about AZAPO ideology and ANC ideology and they were Azazin and other things. I said I was not going to do that, there is my brother who comes after me, I said he was busy in COSAS, that is his field, he must do that, I was not going to do this, I was focusing in the labour movement because it was my strength and this is what I did well. So they sent Rusty because they said he brought me from Jabula Foods and he knew how to handle me, understood me. He said they agreed that I had worked very hard because other unions were collapsing because they had a problem of knowing that you work hard, and people were leaving FOSATU for NACTWU, they said they didn't think that's what I wanted.

Then they created a post in SACTWU, then after that it was the unbanning of the organizations, many people were coming back from exile. In fact there were about a hundred of us who had applied for this position in SACTWU, they hired me and Toli, Simanga. Simanga

came from an independent union, we were still young and those who came back from exile were old, our age was a plus for us, and the experience that we had in the labour movement. They sent Simanga to go with me to fix things in SACTWU, so they hired the two of us.

The areas that gave them a headache was the western region, starting from Roodepoort, Dobsinville and Randfontein. There were problems in Randfontein. They said we must go and start there and from there we will move until Kroonstad, there was also a problem in Kroonstad, Ace Marhashula were not giving them peace and at that time he was very strong politically. We worked with SACTWU but we Koplín didn't understand us, he was white Jewish guy, we didn't understand each other, he was a control freak. Our Secretary was Rob Le Grange, I think he is in Wits now. So Rob understood us more than Koplín did, if there was a problem Rob would say leave those two to me because he understood the labour movement more than Koplín, Koplín was a control freak. With workers it is from bottom to up, it's not from up to bottom. We conscientised workers and told them they should not allow these people to keep coming with new rules, when they said Amandla what were they referring to because Rob was the one to determine people's salaries in the bargaining council. They would decide how much the workers should be paid and they were the lowest paid, you can go and do research, people from the clothing sector were the lowest paid at that time. There were many firms of the clothing sector but they were the lowest paid.

We came in and changed things around, me and Toli, with the backup of the regional executive committee, the Chairperson was Phillip Nyai. It was firstly Zakhele Galela, I called him and told him he belongs on this side and he knew how politics are. The politics in East Rand say Amandla to workers, you must not agree to everything. Then we met

with Phillip Nyai from West Rand, then we changed SACTWU completely, Koplín would say this and that and the workers would listen to everything. We changed the structure of SACTWU in twelve months, Koplín came to terms with this. It was tiring to always be a fire extinguisher, I told Toli that I was tired, I dealt with these things in Jabula Foods, I was tired to always fight. I left SACTWU, it was during the time of the unbanning and the time of the release of Cde Mandela. I was busy with structures of the ANC.

Facilitator: What kind of change did you bring to SACTWU?

Respondent: The change was brought was that workers had powers more than the officials.

Facilitator: How long were you there?

Respondent: Three years.

Facilitator: Three years.

Respondent: Yes. NACTWU was four years. Jabula Foods five years. Then in 1993 I was employed as an organizer of the ANC in Ermelo.

Facilitator: To organise for the ANC?

Respondent: Yes for the ANC.

Facilitator: The nature of the place, were you familiar with the Mpumalanga, you came from Kwa-Thema.

Respondent: I was not familiar with Mpumalanga but there was this thing that I was tired of the Sothos (unclear) blood basis. My father was originally from Swaziland. When they left Swaziland they lived Lovel and when they moved from Lovel they lived in Nyibe. Nyibe is like a Peinville in Ermelo. There were cousins of mine there, so I then decided that let me go to Ermelo, then Ermelo its better. I was employed in Ermelo as an organizer, but I didn't work well, I will be specific, Mathew Phosa couldn't accept that a person who came from Transvaal worked there whereas there were people from the area. We fought that issue, Cyril at the time was the Secretary of the ANC, so there was problem around that, that I come from Gauteng and taking a job in Mpumalanga. Because I was a bulldozer, I didn't care what they said, I went to the masses and organized workers. When I was employed in that region, ANC branches were seven and in twelve months there was hundred branches of the ANC. I said these people were wasting my time calling me to hearings when there are people who need to be organized on the ground, people wanted me, I didn't have time listen to these people who spoke rubbish.

I worked on the ground to the farms where people are neglected, the ANC knows people from the farms through me, I went to the farms and opened branches and in the process fought with white people again. Another thing my mother was born in Magason, she used to tell me that the white person there used to pinch her ear, so this is why I wanted to work that side, so I found that Magason was part of my branches, I said thank God. I worked in the farms and left the people in the townships who changed jobs all the time, they thought they knew a lot, because if you go back, in Mpumalanga there was no active political struggle that happened there. They were suffering from the fear of unknown, I didn't want anything to do with them, I wanted to work.

Unfortunately I came here with an ANC car and got into an accident, it was raining, the car hit (unclear). They did a hearing that I took a car from Mpumalanga and brought it this side, then I was dismissed for that. There was already a problem that they reported to Cyril, when they kept reporting to Cyril about Zandile he didn't connect that it is this Zandile Nkosi.

Facilitator: Oh he didn't make a connection.

Respondent: No he didn't, it was just another Zandile Nkosi in Mpumalanga. So when I went to Shell House to appear for the hearing, I was represented by Rusty, he saw me going with him. When the hearing started, Mathew Phosa was there as well. Other Cdes told me that Phosa was the one who didn't like me. In my disciplinary hearing, I told them that I was in a wrong place, because there was Phosa, there was MEC and all these top level guys in the ANC, I said it looks like I have come to a parliament meeting and not a hearing. So they said no this was a disciplinary hearing, I said to Cde Phosa, you are a Premier of the Province you are not supposed to be here, the MECs as well were not supposed to be there, the people that were required in the disciplinary committee were five people, I listed them, so if you are going to come here as gangsters, I was not going to sit there, I left. I told them that I was not a Cde there, I was an employee, protected by the labour relations act and the basic conditions of employment act. The policy of the ANC was going to be displayed in conference, here was I was an employee of the ANC. So I said if they don't leave I was going to leave and they will hold that hearing without me, I told Rusty that we must leave. After we went outside, we caucused and then went back after ten minutes. In that ten minutes ,when we got back there were already three lawyers in the room, Ntuli and I cant remember the other, there were three of them, Phosa and

others were in the other room while we were in the boardroom, in fact anybody could hear that there were people on the other room laughing and cracking jokes, so I was not even intimidated by them. So we had a hearing, the lawyers asked who Rusty was, I told them it was Rusty Moagi was there to represent me, he was a card carrying member of the ANC. I asked the lawyers if they were card carrying members of the ANC and they said no, I said I was not going to be reprimanded by people who are not card carrying members of the ANC. I asked them if they are labour, criminal or commercial lawyers, because there only labour lawyers could sit in, if a person wanted to reprimand me they had to be labour lawyers because if they were criminal lawyers they should be somewhere else where criminals are involved.

So we found that there was that misunderstanding, I told them that people on the ground need to be organized, not to sit here and be confused. I told them that they don't have jobs to do if they were going to sit there, thirteen of them, to face one woman, and they were ANC members, I said with due respect Chairperson tell Cde Phosa that people want a Premier that does a door to door visit, checking service delivery. He was not a Premier for Zandile Nkosi but a Premier of Mpumalanga which had a lot of problems that needed to be there and solve. I said I was not going to sit in that hearing, so they dismissed me. After they dismissed me I made an appeal to Shell House. When I got to Shell house, they had written a submission to Cyril saying all sorts of things about me. When I got to the Shell House, Cyril said hey you are a problem. I asked him whether they didn't train me to be independent, why did they train me, weren't they happy that I did the right thing, this was my right. Where did they want to exercise my rights, I said I was not going to accept something that is not procedural just because I was in the ANC, I said I was not corrupt. He called Mathew

same time and told him that they know me well at Shell House, he said they were writing a letter to reinstate her with immediate effect, he said there was no reason to sit for a hearing for me. He said in fact COSATU, ANC, NACTWU and politics in South Africa are where they are through her contribution for your own information. He faxed through a copy and gave me a copy. He asked when I was going to go back because he knows I loved Kwa-Thema, I told him I am born and bred there so I will always love the place because my parents and my child are there, I am responsible. My child will not suffer during the time I was still being harassed by Inkatha and the police, being sent to prison and then suffer again now when I work for the ANC, I was not going to do that. So I was reinstated.

After my reinstatement I worked but my working relationship was not conducive enough. They influenced JJ Mabena, I should think you know him. We grew up here with him and when we got to Mpumalanga he pretended not to know me because he was afraid of Phosa. I told him if you don't know me then I don't know you as well, I told him that what they are doing to me they were going to do to him as well. There was this thing that I was a problem, I was still employed by the ANC and I was on the ground with people, I was routed in people. This thing of theirs of sitting in the offices in Nelspruit, they don't know organizing, they are not trained as I am trained in organizing, my experience, expertise and strength I was still using when recruiting. I changed the structure of SANCO because their understanding was that SANCO was an entity on its own. I told SANCO that they were working with civic matters and not political, they must join the ANC. They had people that they had sensitized in the branch of the ANC, one it was nurses and two it was teachers, there was (unclear) there. So ordinary people were scared to join the ANC because they said it was for nurses, teachers, inspectors in schools, it was for educated

people. My argument was always based on to say, I told them that I can unpack the whole ANC to show them that there was no one who is educated in the ANC. The President of the day that time was Cde Mandela, he said everyone must vote and put a cross, that was symbol number one that showed that in South Africa there was no one that was educated, a minority was educated but the majority that was to make the ANC win was not educated and cannot make a cross. I told them that teachers used to copy because their invigilators were their friends, no one has proof that they passed genuinely. Yes people in other places have proof, yes some of my friends were teachers and invigilators were their friends and obviously they were not going to guard them if they brought in answers, so they cannot come and claim that they are educated.

JJ Mabena at that time was an MEC for Economic Development. Mpumalanga is made by Germans, they great grandfathers and grandfathers. Carolina was named after Piet Retief's child. Machadadorp was named by a German guy. Ermelo is a capital city of Germany. (unclear) is good morning in German. German is the base of Germans, so there's a relationship between Mpumalanga and Germans. There was this thing that there should be community development centres. Because I was a problem in the ANC, I was employed and was busy with people on the ground and they can't reach people. I told Phosa if I am still here I will make sure that they don't elect him as a Premier again, I told him that I will make sure that branches don't elect him, especially Gert Sibande District. And that is exactly how it happened.

So they used JJ Mabena, they sent Rusty through JJ, they said to Rusty there is this German guy who wants to establish community centres. They said I have capacity and strength to start things, they said he must

speak to me so I can apply for this position so that I can start this project. Rusty asked me to do this for the organisation's sake, he persuaded me to do it because Phosa was no longer there and that it was not my intention, I said yes it was not my intention. I applied and they hired me, then we developed Local Business Services Centre. Then there was this guy Tom Fry, he is the first person in Germany, Dutch to start a computer school from Grade 0. He came, he was a politician that side but was stubborn as I am. They said that I would not be able to get along with him because I don't like men, that is what they said. They said I work well with women that with men. I asked then whether Rusty was a lesbian, because they send him to me all the time and I work well with him.

Tom Fry came, in the interviews there were ten of us, four women and all of them had degrees. They asked him who he preferred from all the candidates, he said he wanted the one that was very talkative, saying me, and he described what I was wearing. They called me in and he said yes he wanted me. He said he thought he would work well with me because the other candidates were too soft, he wouldn't be able to work with them because we won't get along. Everyone thought we won't get along because we were of the same character, but they were wrong. Tom Fry and I became friends. In six month the Local Business Service Centre was operational, we established business skills training, welding, electrical department. He would come six months in and six months out. Then in twenty four months, he told the ANC that they should give me a job to start development centres because the twelve months work she is going to do, you know that she is going to sit doing nothing because she does a 30 days work in two days, she is going to go back to the structures of the ANC, because there the people have been trained and capacitated, their managers are doing

their jobs even if she is not there. These twelve months is going to be a waste to her. She is finished with that place.

But they didn't listen to him. I went back to the ANC structures, I was between LBSC and the structures. Then the LBSC expanded, and in the township I also started other projects for people. I called in Apex Training, outside the LBSC because it didn't have enough funding, I managed to speak to the Department of Labour that because they had funding, they must train the, I think we had hundred groups of people that we trained in that twelve months outside LBSC. LBSC wasn't able to reprimand me because he had warned them to give me more work. His three years finished and then I also thought LBSC was going to waste my time, so I went back to the ANC then I was elected as a Councilor, I served for a five year term and came back here. If you compare the politics I come from with what is happening now, the things that are happening that we cannot hide, the fact that I was always loyal and serving the community without any interest from anyone and when I see a person who needs to be empowered instead of them being poor, so if you look at the things, I decided that I was getting out and coming back here. I should think they need the experience that I have here, I intend to start development centres.

Facilitator: Wonderful.

Respondent: . I will do that because the comrades that I left here, others are in municipality and others in various areas. The others I worked with in unions and NCOPs, they are members of parliament, they say I must go and do this and give people jobs because people have no jobs especially the youth.

Facilitator: Are they willing to support you or are they just talking?

Respondent: Yes they are going to support by force, I will follow them, they will support the projects whether they like it or not, just for the betterment of the people. I think in January there was an advert here looking for people who were going to work at correctional services. The girl that just left here is from Ermelo, she has a child with my son who died, so I am helping her through school. So I went to drop her CV, it was like half of South Africa going to submit their CVs, in fact I was so touched. They always say there is budget available, there is jobs creation, and job creation I for one I am not being funny, but even in my ward I did not want people who collect paper with wire, also people who dig graves, I didn't want that in my ward. If you check Mpumalanga, it has old men, now if you are going to say old men must go and dig graves for R50 a day.

Facilitator: That is exploitation.

Respondent: That is correct. I have basics and principles, people cannot be unfairly treated, which is vice versa the governance, my ruling is from bottom up and governance is from up to bottom. So that's why I am saying let me go to community projects, they are going to give the money, I am going to do that, the only thing is that I was delayed by Telkom. The other side where I sleep, I have put up a computer and other things, the only then that delayed me was Telkom, but I saw an advert which said you buy this plug in of internet and email. I am going to buy it next week and install it, I am going to go to cooperative and get people working. They are going to issue it, (unclear) project, they will give it. They will issue it, people must work, eat and survive. People need to be conscientised that if you go to work they will exploit you, two there are labour brokers right now, and there unions that we used to have no longer exist, so its better if people are entrepreneurs, and it must be projects that are going to be viable

and self sustainable. Like now women give birth everyday, one can start a project of making disposable nappies, a project of doing washing soap, white people are still controlling the economy, for instance there Mac washing power, there used to be Surf and Omro but now there are a lot of products, even the ones used in washing machines.

They mustn't tell them about farming because it is even difficult for the people who live and grew up in rural areas. If you say I must start planting where am I going to do it, I can't even do it here outside my house, the minister comes and say we must have gardening in our homes. When have you ever done gardening here in Kwa-Thema. How are they going to do it? Why is the government taking the budget and giving it to rural development projects only, what about here urban areas.

Facilitator: There's poverty even here.

Respondent: There's poverty and they are worse because they are educated. Kids that come here looking for work are qualified accountants, no one is employing them. Six or seven of them came here, I said to them they must come so we can register a cooperative.

Facilitator: Yes they must also think creatively.

Respondent: It's that mentality that they come from university.

Facilitator: That is not going to help them.

Respondent: I told them that it doesn't work, I said they will manage their own project, the skills they have will be used here, they will audit

their own books, then the projects that I am going to establish, they will be the auditors, I said they must register an auditing firm. A qualified lawyer comes from university and opens an office and works, what's to stop them. I tell them that they see people driving cars and living in the suburbs, that person pays the bond, the car and has his family to look after as well because these people sent him to school, he/she doesn't owe them anything but he is obligated to look back at the people that were there for him, they are his responsibility, while they were helping him they sacrificed some things so that they can have a future. So my focus is community development projects.

Facilitator: Any closing words maybe?

Respondent: Closing word is transformation. What we have fought for, I as a person in labour movement, I have achieved that, together with the people we were with, we achieved that. But what I can see now as a medium term of COSATU, Cde Vavi and other labour organizations is that they need to merge and make one big federation. They need to do this because now there is no labour movement that says I am for AZAPO ideology, I am pushing AZAPO, ANC underneath, it's purely for labour. If its purely for labour, the basic conditions of employment and labour relations act now, it has changed completely and people will not see a need to join the union if they are well informed because the CCMA is there, if you go to CCMA you don't need a lawyer, people who are there are highly qualified, experienced, they have acquired a lot of wisdom like we have. They see a case a mile away how it's going to end. How do you then fight labour if there labour brokers, in fact the government of the day supports labour brokers. So how do you do that, one you must sit in the bargaining unit, and you sit with a labour broker, the labour broker is not a direct employer, then you are fighting with the wrong person and

a losing battle. Yes you can join a union for basic conditions, but why should, everything is there, the minister is updating everything, but the information centres are the most important thing that the government must do.

They must open information centres, independent information centres which are not going to be controlled by government or CCMA. Independent information centres which are going to be categorized, information desk on health, transport, that's the way to go forward right now. Yes you can be organized, but there's no mechanism to stop poverty today, instead it's getting worse everyday. Saabi is closing down, Carlton paper is closing down in July, they have already received letters, and those people hire a lot of people. If a company retrenches 200 people, that means 20000 families are going to suffer. The problem that we are sitting with now, yes I am going to open a community centre but it won't cater for 2000 people, maybe it will cater for 20 people, here its like 5 people in each cooperative, it's a drop in the ocean. Now everything changed, our children are educated and are not getting work, that is the challenge.

Facilitator: And what do we do about it?

Respondent: What do we do about that. They are now educated, they didn't want their parents to be disappointed, but are now not working, they are not being swallowed anywhere, there is no consumption of them, no matter how educated they are. Hence there was a stampede in the universities, they think that if they study in FETs they will be okay, but still nothing is happening.

Facilitator: They are not being swallowed, that's the best way of putting it. As a result people must become creative, and find means and ways in which they can create jobs.

Respondent: Yes. The other thing is, as you mentioned that you were referred by Mr. Zulu to me, the other problem is that the other labour activists are being neglected and looking at what I was said to you, if it was not the fact that I am Zandile Nkosi, trying my way through, I should think the white people I fought with and all my energy would be buried in a grave because I would be saying that I did this and that. We are not gifted equally. There are other comrades who are poor, we have done a lot, the ANC was banned, AZAPO, BCM and PAC were not very visible, but there was only workers pushing, and workers were in the forefront liberating this country. Now you ask yourself who is taking care of them, I am going to start with them, although they are old, like Bra Z, the only thing he is healthy, so what do you do with others. If I am talking about Jabula Foods, its closed, and they have played a very good part in the struggle to shake the Apartheid regime, where are their children, where are the people that worked, nobody takes care of that.

Facilitator: Its history.

Respondent: Its history, it has vanished into thin air. The history of the Boers does not die.

Facilitator: It doesn't die, that's true.

Respondent: Julius Malema is talking about nationalization now, there's a problem with Cdes. Their history does not die but our things die. Information does not fall. From your side I don't know if you are

doing this project, can we then say because we will need, me in person, we will need people who accredited to give training because you cannot start a project without who know skills like business skills training, I will also have people who are going to do project development, that guy has trained me, its not good enough, I am not a dictator, I share everything. With your own guys you must put in place programmes which are going to assist this project, once I have registered them, I think it will only take one month, because I will take them with my car, just now my car is broken but I will fix it, I will take them to go and develop a business plan and do this and that and have this structure and go to these guys. I am telling you they are going to give money, I will start with here with Social Development because they said they are going to plough back into the community, I will start with all this companies and these malls that are surrounding us.

Facilitator: They must be pushed.

Respondent: They must be pushed and before we go to government, we've got people here, there's Tsakane mall here, they wouldn't get that place if they didn't have a Social development plan.

Facilitator: Exactly.

Respondent: So all those projects and all of them, there's a Impala company there, people are at risk, they are inhaling that thing, their lifespan is shortened as we speak. So their social development plan is that they must build a clinic, that clinic was not built with their money, I think the department of health assisted them. What is it that they are doing because 80% of the people there are not doing anything, what is their youth doing, so we need to come with all those projects. In fact

although we will do a lot of research but lets work, come with projects, this project is more advanced, this thing started a long time ago.

Facilitator: Yes it is advanced, they've been doing this for a long time.

Respondent: Yes they have been doing it for a long time.

Facilitator: I am available, I can also use my networks as well.

Respondent: Ok.

Facilitator: I have also some few ideas, history of Kwa-Thema for instance, that's a project on its own. But I have other skills in art whereby you organize students and artists from the township to impart art skills to kids and so on.

END.