

## Lucas Motsoane

Facilitator: Okay this is an interview with Mr Lucas Motsoane, we are in Soweto, the date is 22 June 2010, the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Daddy, thanks for your time. You can speak in any other language that you are comfortable with, please give me a background of where you were born, schooling and so on and how you eventually got connected to Wits and the labour issues?

Respondent: I was born in Sophiatown, on 17 October 1948 and I always say to people I was born born date because that is when the National Party took over the government. I grew up in Sophiatown as a little boy but with the advent of *Azikhwelwa* (bus strikes), my uncle was involved in the ANC at the time. He told us not to go to school and we didn't go to school, I was in Sub A in 1955. I did not know much, I was just a little boy, my self and my aunt, the youngest from my mother's side, we used to live with my grandmother, we didn't go to school. After the strike we went back to school and one lady teacher just spotted us and told us to go back home because we did not come to school during the strike. I later to know that she was after my uncle, she wanted an affair with my uncle, sorry about that. Now she was bitter, so she threw us out of the school.

My granny decided that we must move out, we moved to Hebron, outside Pretoria. I went there and started school all over again in 1956, Sub A, so I did my Sub A, and in 1960 Kilernton moved to Hebron, and Hebron was a very quiet village and suddenly here's big training college moving into the area, coming up with politics, PAC politics coming into play. The first time I was exposed to any sort of politics when I was just getting to understand things. By 1963 when I was doing my Standard 6,

this training college was now using us as a training centre, teachers would learn teaching by teaching us. They wouldn't teach us our subjects, they would just touch it a little bit and went into politics thereafter. And suddenly we would hear him say "the boers are coming to fetch me", that is how they were being arrested, Moseneke's group. Moseneke at the time was in the same age group with me, Moseneke was born in 1948 but in January.

So he was arrested from his school I think in Atteridgeville, we were being taught by these guys, the police used to come and fetch them just like that everyday, they would fetch them from primary school, I was at Klaseri Primary school in Hebron. So that is how I grew up in the PAC politics. I didn't know anything else, I had heard of ANC from Sophiatown but I was a small boy, I could not understand what was going on. So I passed my Standard 6 at Hebron and came over to Johannesburg and went to Meadowlands Secondary school, I did my JC there and I went to Orlando West High school where I did my Matric. Immediately thereafter, well we did not pass very well so we could not go to university. So I got a job at Anglo American, De Beers, that was my first contact with the real apartheid of employers. At the end of the year, I wanted to go and re-write my matric, so I did but I had to come back to work in December. When I returned I found that everyone was going away on holiday, so I was told I can work in the stores department. When I got there I found this white man pouring water into a bucket. And then he said "come with a bucket", I asked him what am I going to do with it, he said "you going to wash my car", I said I'm not here to wash your car, you should go and wash your car yourself, forget about me. I was already developing that antagonism with white people. He tried to report me to the personnel department, they also didn't know what to do because we were the first

lab assistants at the time and we were coming up with a new mindset from the people that they have heard all along. Most of the time they had labourers. We were the first people who had gone through matric who seemed to have a little bit of science and mathematics in their heads. So we posed a real danger to the whole factory. Anyway we managed, in three years we resigned because we were doing synthetic diamonds and we were told it's a five year project. At the end of the third year, our leader, he was white and very appreciative of what we were doing. He told us "guys you are 18 months ahead of schedule and this is very great for me because you are going to finish this project within the stipulated period and we will save a lot of money. I said to him give us more money for us to save you more money. He was quite willing, he went to his bosses and told them that the guys want some more money. They refused.

January 1972 we go back to work, they stopped us and they've increased our hours of work by 1.5 hours a day, they took 30 minutes of our clocking time in the morning, 08:30, we started work at 8, they also took half an hour from our lunch and they gave us another extra half an hour to five o'clock and they give us R3 increase. That was it. Then I said to myself I'm not going to have any kind of relations with these people, I encouraged the guys to resign, we actually called it a mini Ovambo strike because there was a strike in Ovamboland at the time. So we resigned. It put the whole factory into kayos because they had to get some new people and they had to train them and they did not have enough time to do so and we were gone.

Then in 1972 I got a job at Wits, as a medical photographer, that was my line of work. I was a photographer, I did a course in photography

immediately after I left de Beers early 1972. So by July I got this post at Wits Medical school, and I was employed almost immediately because I was tested with an x-ray plate to go and make a print out of it, and then immediately when I came out with the print, the guy said "you are the man I've been looking for". He called the personnel department and told them "please hire this man, don't interview him". By October that year, I just missed .., I started working there in October. I had just missed the formation of black workers union, or it was called the black university workers association because at the time we were not allowed to be called unions, we were either associations, worker associations or licence committees, we belonged to licence committees with management. It was a 50/50 group of people, management and workers and we had to decide on basic issues, but not wage negotiations, they determined that. And we were told that the law does not allow us to do A,B,C,D with blacks because it is not in the constitution. But we had to fight on.

I became a member of this association, Black University Workers Association, I was elected as shop steward in October 1972 and at the elections of April 1973, I was elected the chairman of the shop steward committee. The following year 1974 I was elected into the committee, the main committee. So we .., I started having a lot of interest in worker issues and we started going to courses on labour matters and there was a lot of unrest, remember there was a strike in 1973 in Durban, the Durban Workers Strike. Those strikes and labour unrest started pushing us into a way of realising how important worker issues were. So June 1976 also came in the midst of us trying to gain something of the employers. And if you remember well, because you're a historian, after June 1976, around 1977/78 there was the VM Commission which was established which came out with a report in 1979, which recognised that every worker must

have the right to belong to a trade union. That was the beginning of everything. Then we started having mushrooming of school of labour relations and things like that. There was also CUSA, they are the ones that started organising trade unions and associations, and give us more information. Ironically, some of the lecturers at Wits were part of CUSA and forming the worker education unit within CUSA. I forget some of the names, I don't know if Kalushi gave them to you. There was another one, a Hollander, he was actually the architect of worker education unit here in town, I'm getting old. But nevertheless we started going to courses in the early 1980s, we started going along with CUSA because obviously the relationship between CUSA and AZAPO and PAC brought us together. At the time, COSATU was not formed, there was FOSATU. FOSATU was a very weak, there was a struggle for an ANC controlled labour federation within the country. In CUSA we had four strong units, which were later taken over by COSATU, NUM, NUMSA, SACAWU and FAWU, they all went over there and left CUSA in a very terrible state. But we managed to have two labour federations. COSATU was formed in 1985, there was supposed to be a summit but we never came to agree on the principles of a single labour federation for the country. So CUSA remained what it was and later became NACTU. So I served in the central committee of NACTU in 1988., we as Black University Workers Association, we took a decision to affiliate, and we affiliated to NACTU in 1988. Almost immediately we were part of the central committee of NACTU, by virtue of us being the leadership of BUA. I served in the education unit as well. We used to attend seminars at Hammanskraal, remember the Catholic Church in Hammanskraal and then also at Wilgespruit, those were our main centres where we attended educational courses. The Catholic Church was actually very helpful in helping us out with the venues.

We on our side, because we were a small component of the university workers, we decided we were too small to go along, so we invited other structures within the government circles, such as municipality workers, health workers, and in 1997 we formed MEHAU which was Municipality, Education, Health and Allied Workers Union. I was the founding president of MEHAU. Then as it was normal you would have an opposing factor from COSATU then there was NEHAWU formed on the other side, there was power struggle for membership which actually broke down a lot of units because at Wits NEHAWU would go on strike, they would poach our members to go outside with them and when people were being persecuted for going on strike, then they would come to us to represent them and then we said we didn't ask you to go on strike for a wrong reason, you went on strike for NEHAWU but now you come to us to defend you, sorry we can't do that. So our union just dropped in numbers especially in the education sector but the municipality sector remained going but today I don't think they exist anymore. NACTU continued to exist, right now the last time I heard was that it was going to form a merger with EDUSA but apparently it hasn't finalised the merger, they are still in negotiations.

When I left Wits in 1999 I became a part time educator with NACTU, going to seminars and helping workers with whatever we had to do in terms of labour relations, negotiation skills, grievances and how to handle disciplinary issues and things like that. In February 2000 NACTU employed me as the National Co-ordinator for organising. So I had to open up offices in all the provinces and organise quite a lot of activities in all those areas. We had a R5million for the following five years, unfortunately I don't know what happened, the money fizzled out in no time and I was out of a job in three years. But we had done quite a bit of work

throughout the 9 provinces. We had opened up offices, we had employed staff and we had managed to get transport for the organisers to be able to reach out to the membership, we continued with the worker education, occasionally every three/four months and so forth. So I left NACTU in 2003 for financial reasons because they didn't have any more money to continue with the project.

Facilitator: otherwise you would have continued with the activities. Just to go back a bit, you mentioned that you were exposed to PAC politics in Hebron, more than ANC politics?

Respondent: yes

Facilitator: Was Hebron and that part of the world a PAC stronghold

Respondent: no it wasn't, the influence came with the moving of Kilernton to Hebron. Kilnerton was in Pretoria next to the city in town, and there was a lot of PAC membership within Kilnerton. So when the whole institution moved to Hebron it moved with these people and it influenced .., I don't think it influenced a lot of people, it influenced a few people because they were cut short by the regime, because they came and arrested them in big numbers. I think I got that influence because I was in contact with the student trainees, they came to teach us and they mixed teaching with politics at the time. I don't think it really affected the whole village because firstly, you know how villages are, once they see foreign people in their area they are likely to say "stay away we don't want you, who are you, what do you want here". These students were very violent, they would go and fight with the village students, they lived in the hostels and the others lived in their homes, so there would be a clash of interest,

politically and girls. Do you remember POXO, it was very hot at the time, POXO activities, and we would get The Daily Mail, Monday's issue we would get on a Tuesday, the students would come with the newspapers to show us. That was their main interest of PAC politics. The Sharpeville issue also happened around that time.

Facilitator: When you got to Wits, the nature of the place, you had some experiences of racism in other workplaces before joining Wits?

Respondent: Ja

Facilitator: What kind of a place was Wits back then, 1972?

Respondent: You see this is what we used to say about Wits, when you are outside you are longing to be in there, and when you get inside you want to get out of it because the apartheid at Wits was very subtle, it wasn't direct and you know, you see how people don't want you to be there but they don't want to tell you to get away, they make the life difficult for you. And when I got there in 1972, the very first few months, I was hot under the collar, I had actually decided I need to move out of Wits within five years and then I went to look for a temporary solution by checking if there was any organised labour within the university. That is when I found out that just a few days before I got there they formed this Black University Workers Association in September 1972, so that is when I joined. Still there was no joy because we were not getting anywhere in terms of negotiations. When we started negotiating for salaries and conditions of employment, that started in the 1980s after the VM Commission was passed by parliament. Then we were able to negotiate and they were so difficult, very difficult, they couldn't believe that we



could demand 10 or 12 percent increase, they said “what are you going to do with so much money”

Facilitator: being black

Respondent: a black man was not supposed to have money in his pocket at the time. I will give you an example, when I went to Lesotho in 1974, I was hardly about three years in Wits, I was arrested for being in the country and when they searched me I had about R80 in my pocket, they said “where do you have so much money”? I said I worked for it and I was only R80, they asked me if I knew Bureau of State Security, I said yes I do know about it, they asked me if I was on their payroll, I said no, they asked me how I knew it, I said the newspapers are screaming about these guys, the Sunday Times, the Daily Mail, they talk about this, I read about these things. That was almost the same scenario that we had at Wits in the 1980s where they felt that we should be happy about what they are giving us and they thought Wits was a leading institution in terms of salary payments and what have you and a whole lot of conditions of service. Basically we are saying don't compare us with other institutions, look at the reality of the situation, are you paying these people enough, is this above the poverty line, are you paying enough money for a family of five. Remember they used to have that kind of scenario when we went for seminars, the white liberal guys, they would paint the scenario that this is what we expect a family of five to earn at this time. So that is what we used to take to the table, a family of five

Facilitator: and we were more

Respondent: Father and mother and three kids and our families were much more than that. So We had a serious problem, it later changed at a later time, but even then they were still difficult, then they would blame it that they are not determining the salary, the government and Committee of University Principals, they also had to sit down and determine salaries in terms of their geographical positions because they would say Wits is more expensive than Bloemfontein or another university, Fort Hare or whatever, so the salaries could not be the same, and it was just one of those horrible negotiations.

Facilitator: But were there any forms of strikes maybe if these people are failing to negotiate?

Respondent: Yes our first strike at Wits was on 5 November 1982 I think, it was caused by Glean Thomas at Bara. We had workers there who belonged to the union and the administrators there felt they were too old and too fat to be working there so they wanted to chuck them out and bring in some young blood. It was not to be, the students joined the strike and they trashed the cars of the administrators. I remember the two of them was Vincent Maphai and Dr Kgosi Letlape. They were the administrators at the time, and Kgosi's car was trashed, the tyres were stabbed, they emptied all the rubbish bins into the cars. It was a mess. That was a very first strike ever at Wits, and people did not believe that Wits could go on strike, and the university administration wanted to block the whole scenario from the media. They didn't want the media to know about it but you know in the media how they operate, they came to know about it and they walked in. We actually worked very hard, Kalushi included up to ..., and NEHAWU, let me not leave NEHAWU out because although they didn't want us on the same negotiating table with the

administration but we had to be there by virtue of being a member of the university community. So we had to play part in any negotiations. So our negotiations went right up to having to sit on the selection committee of the university chief executive and his juniors through the union influence of NEHAWU and ourselves and we had some other organisations/white staff who at first didn't want to join but as time went on they realised that they are being left on the periphery and then we had academic staff association which had a lot of liberals in it, who came and joined us and then we had black academic staff as well and to a large extent the black academic staff was led by think you know him, Shadrack Bhuto, he was at Wits in the late 1980s and 1990s, the Makgoba debacle I think you know about it, you were involved in it very strongly.

Facilitator: How rife was racism at Wits when you look back?

Respondent: Prior to 1972 when I got there, racism was there but the nature of the workers at the time was a submissive one. They had told themselves that they are there to work, these are white people and we must respect them, not fight or oppose them. I remember when I got there I met some old man, including Herbert, they were the elders, they had been there for 20 years when we arrived in the 1970s. They were very submissive. When I told them that I am from De Beers and that the boers treated us badly, it was naked racism/blunt racism. Even when they addressed us from the gates they would be so aggressive when making announcements, when they changed the times, they were trying to tell us, and I said to them no, I'm not coming to start work here at 8, you need to talk to me first. You should write to me and tell me about it, sit down and talk about it. So I was telling the elders at Wits about what happened where I came from. They said to me "we don't do that here, don't try, we

are happy". There was that compound situation where they were having free meals, they would start there in the morning, have bread and tea or coffee, lunch time they would have a full meal, pap and vleis and sometimes some vegetables, everyday. You will see them walking to the kitchen to have lunch.

So when we came in, we tried to say this is not right, the whites were surprised at us because they told us they are enjoying it, they like it. I asked them if they would be willing to go and eat there? He can't do that. You see the apartheid was there, because nobody was saying much about it, it was not visible until the young people of the 1960s, those that completed Matric in the 1960s joined Wits started opposing certain things. Then the racism became very naked, it was exposed because people started fighting with whites, competing for positions and things like that.

Facilitator: Did the situation at Wits change over time or it was changed by the unions or did it the nature of the situation, did it happen automatically at Wits and across the country? I think it was the nature of the situation especially after June 1976 because a lot of people started becoming aware of how oppressive our government is, it seemed as if they had forgotten about Sharpeville, how the boers treated our people. The same thing happened in 1976 where now the boers were killing small children, shooting with live bullets at small children, now people started realising that the boers were killing our children. I remember on that day I was going to a union meeting in Braamfontein, I was from Hillbrow, the medical school was in Hillbrow and I was going to a meeting in Braamfontein. There was a lady from Meadowlands, she lived next to my home, she worked at a chemist. I found her standing outside crying that

the boers were killing our children in the township. I asked her how she found out she told me on radio. Communication lines were absent, we didn't have cell phones, we didn't have anything, you had to go into an office or a public phone to get to know what is happening. When I got to the meeting and told them what was happening in Soweto, they didn't know, they actually thought I was wasting their time because they wanted to go on with the meeting. That was escalation of violence in the country and of people starting to realise that we are sitting on a powder can, the boers will kill us. Things started shaping up.

Again, the United Front which was formed in Wits by different organisations against the administrative .., also about appointment of black academics into senior positions, there was a lot of resistance from the white people. If you remember Prof. June Claire, she was opposed to the appointment of Makgoba, she was opposed to the appointment of Nolutshungu. Nolutshungu was appointed over her and he died, he resigned first because when he went for a medical it was discovered that he has a terminal disease. So he resigned and we were angry, "they give you a position you resign, what is going on, we fought for you". The next thing he was dead then there was a rumour that he's been poisoned by ... So that's what happened. Makgoba's appointment was a very bitter one, actually because Makgoba became very close to us, he even asked us "guys what is happening". We told him that we have been at Wits for a long time, don't be allowed to be used as a window dresser because they will put you there as if you are the black man of the university and in the background they sideline you. He came to tell us that June Sinclair is not talking to him and they were both deputy vice chancellors. It was sad that it was accepted, because June Sinclair thought she was the ultimate choice after Charlton. It was never to be because we fought very hard

and we put her out and Nolutshungu was appointed, unfortunately he died. We then had to have another round of selection process of another principal. Then Colin Bandi came in after Nolutshungu. It went through the same process, we were all sitting at table, the unions and the other staff associations and registrars, each and every community organisation was represented there and we had to give an opinion of what we think and we also formed discussion blocks. When we realise that you and him are together, then we say okay let us talk about this, caucus groups. And within the caucus groups we had whites in the major caucus but again after hours the black people would have another caucus to look at who is not genuine within the white establishment within our group. We would have these liberal whites with us as a caucus, but then one of them would be coming with an agenda and when we are not there he would try to influence the other group that let us not go along with those guys things like that. Ultimately we managed to be open with ourselves, we would tell them that we are sitting together as a caucus on the left but still we don't think some of us are genuine. That would open up discussions around the issue and we would end up agreeing that when it comes to the vote this is how we are going to vote. Because if you look at Nolutshungu and June Sinclair, there was a third candidate, Njabulo Ndebele, he was the third candidate. We had a public dinner debates with them. They would do their presentation and they would interact with the public at the great hall, all three of them. So we in our group, we had agreed that we must look for a popular vote between Nolutshungu and Ndebele. If the boat swings to Ndebele we all go to Ndebele, if it swings to Nolutshungu we would all go to him. But let us not allow to give June Sinclair an opportunity to split our vote because that was very possible, so we all agreed. So when the vote went to Nolutshungu, there was one academic in our midst who said "guys I nominated Ndebele and if you

are all going to vote for Njabulo and he does not see a single vote on his side then he will think I've betrayed him. So we said no we have enough votes to kick out June Sinclair so you can vote for him and the rest of us voted for Nolutshungu. You see this liberal came out clean because we had said before we don't trust that people are having the same agenda with all of us, so he came out very clean, we actually congratulated him on that. We wouldn't have known who voted for Ndebele when we all agreed that we are going to vote for Nolutshungu.

Facilitator: But was Nolutshungu later forgiven if I may ask for the resigning?

Respondent: Yes because it was later explained that ..., when he resigned he didn't tell us why he was resigning, and there was speculation that he is being influenced by some forces within the right wing in Wits. He was also an international scholar of high repute. So it was very surprising for him to pull out without giving us a reason and when we later learned that the medical certificate had indicated that he had I think leukemia or something, it was something which was life threatening and fatal and within a few months he died, before he could take office. So we had to forgive him for that. His body was flown back here and buried in the Eastern Cape.

Facilitator: When you look at the activities of the union at Wits, would you say you mostly succeeded or succeeded less?

Respondent: It's sort of a ping pong thing, we succeeded in bringing in the culture of negotiations at Wits, that every year we need to sit down and negotiate, and as time went on we even became very professional

in getting expert help from outside, people who would come and tell us financially speaking this is what you should be asking for. There we became very professional. But the bad side of it is that we lost out, in that we were not united as unions, we were going for each other's blood. NEHAWU wanted to be seen as the main majority member and as such they had the sole right to negotiate. And then we brought this issue of university communities, having a stake in any issue that must be negotiated. So as a result, MISHAU, I don't know if it still at Wits and NEHAWU I think there are very few people. And another thing that actually destroyed the union activity at Wits is the process of retrenchment. They retrenched a lot of people. I think also due to some extent technology. Like I was a medical photographer, I was doing over a 1000 slides a day but with the advent of computers and laptops, doctors started using those laptops to do their presentations, whereas I used to do photography, take pictures, send them to the lab for processing, bring them back, cut out slides and mount them for each and every presenter. That thing went away completely. So I was left reading a newspaper every morning. I would start off in the tea room, with the others they started outsourcing, like cleaning staff, they outsourced it to someone outside. The worst thing that they did, they encouraged some of the supervisors of cleaners to open up a resource for cleaning. It worked against the union, because now the staff that is being outsourced is not officially attached to Wits. Wits would say go and negotiate with the union, and those people that have hired you, we are out. They did the same thing in mercenary and all the little bits and pieces from the west campus, they just outsourced everything, including transport. So it literally killed the membership. People were retrenched, I remember there was a time, after I had left, they retrenched about 600 people at one go. So



there was a bit of success but it was nullified by the retrenchment process and other innovations.

Facilitator: But back then when the union was established in the 1970s, when you came in it was already there, it was a baby then, an infant so to speak, how keen were the people on unions in the 1970s?

Respondent: At first they were not keen, because they did not know what the union was, and you know, people have got this resistance to change, when they see a new thing coming in they say no we are okay as we are please. And you must remember the trade unions were very unpopular with the government at the time, not only with the government but a lot of employers. Employers depended on the government, if the government is opposed to this then it's no good for us to support the unions. So it took a very long time for people to understand.

Facilitator: In general would you describe Wits as a tough place, how would you describe it when you look back from the union point of view?

Respondent: Tough in which sense?

Facilitator: tough in the sense of workers being free, workers being enslaved, workers being too relaxed, workers being coiled?

Respondent: Workers were too relaxed prior to the union formations. And they were quite happy and then when the union came about, the university wanted to play ball but not to loose. They did not want to loose at negotiations, they wanted to have the upper hand. This is where they were tough, they did not ill-treat workers as such, they were very tough on

negotiations and it caused a bit of problems. So the university was a bit hard on negotiations because I remember at one stage, one of the negotiators said I cannot put somebody in a position as an administrator and have to demote him because the union says. So if I agree with the union in demoting that person, it means my selection process was not right. Even when we came to challenge some of those positions of white people in those positions, we would have a very difficult task in removing them, simply because they would think we are challenging them as an authority for placing an unfit person in a position and our argument was based on managerial skills as opposed to academic qualification. We were saying this person is good as an academic, but is not good as a manager. He is not focussed on the workforce. He is focussed on his achievement as an academic in research and other things, and as a result, the managerial part of it failed and this is why when Bantu came in, he did not place professors into positions of deputy vice chancellors for finance and labour and students, for academic yes, he put the professors but for finance he decided to go outside and get someone with a wealth of experience in financial handling. And before it used to be professors who were deputy vice chancellors, only professors, academic people

Facilitator: and no understanding of finances?

Respondent: yes no understanding of finances and things like that. So this is where we had a problem especially at negotiations or even when we handled cases, where we would clash with management on the selection process, where we would clash with management on the people who were giving them information in relation to salary increases and things like that. So they were tough on that area, but now they also went, again to victimise some of our members. You know like when Mandela was

released, boer boy would say "go and tell Mandela to give you an increase", things like that. When the unions came into being a supervisor would say "go and tell your union to give you and increase, go and tell your union to give you transport to come to work on time", victimisation. So that's the subtle apartheid I was talking about. They don't come out straight, they go around the bush and you can't pin them on it, you cannot say yes you told my member to do that.

Facilitator: the formation of NEHAWU did it eventually cripple the union?

Respondent: Yes it crippled my union not completely to its demise, because we ..,at the time when NEHAWU came in we were still ..(unclear) we were a small click within the university so NEHAWU came with the help of other formations in other universities and the students. I remember at the time the student who led the NEHAWU thing, Jeremy I think that is his surname. He organised all the pamphlets, every printing of NEHAWU and they flooded the university and they pushed for a commission of inquiry into our existence as a democratic union because we were still having a black tag in our name (Black University Workers Association) and they were trying to say that has fallen off, they are racists you see. So we had a real tough time, our resources were very limited, so NEHAWU came up with this big gun student who was helping them and the ANC influence. So that is where they managed to grab a big chunk of members from us to them because prior to that we had overnight percent membership of black workers within the university. But after NEHAWU came through, they slashed us to less than 50% and this is why management wanted us to re-negotiate our agreement with them because we had fallen below the 50% plus one threshold. So then that is when we went out to negotiate with outside unions within our sector and we came up with MISHAU and

we launched MISHAU and I was the first president and we had to re-negotiate in the new name of MISHAU to have a recognition agreement.

Facilitator: After 1994 what should have been the role of unions?

Respondent: In 1988 I did a course at Wits Business School and our project was what is the role of the unions post apartheid? At the time we were blank because we just saw a lot of violence and anti-black and anti-white and a whole of of things that were going to cause mayhem in the country and it was very difficult to come up with a clear perspective of what we were looking at. But during the process of negotiations, the CODESA and things, although there was this violent thing by Terblanche and others, we had a lot of hope, that we can see it clearly now that a black government is in the offing and we said a black government with the help of international community is going to be a success and we also read about the demise of PW Botha, the fall of the Berlin and Pik Botha negotiating positively for a new order with PW de Klerk, we started seeing a government coming into place but we were not sure if it will deliver because we thought the ANC outside did not have an experience of government, it dealt with a lot of governments outside the country and weather they themselves put together would be a good package, we were not sure but we said we will learn by mistakes. I think we did, but they did better than we thought. Even at first we .., I remember at meetings people were saying let's go on strike, let's go on strike and some people would say no let's not go on strike, let's give the new government a chance. People would say but they are not paying our salaries, we must go on strike, life goes on, we've got to negotiate every year. And it became the norm, but we've had more strike action in the new government than we've ever had before 1994.

Facilitator: When you look back, was the union activity exercise worth it?

Respondent: yes it was worth it, it has opened our eyes, you know like, sometimes some of us do regret why we didn't go to school, why didn't we go to formal tertiary education because we were sick and tired of the apartheid system, the Bantu education system then we said to hell let me go and get job, I will study maybe by correspondence. It was very difficult and then when we got into labour movement, I personally and quite a few guys who I worked with, we found an opportunity to read, although we did not do a full course in tertiary education, but we did snippets of post-graduate courses that put us in a better position than where we were before we got into the trade union movement. But basically in the long run it has helped, a lot of people know their rights. Even people who are not educated will tell you I know my right, in the trade union movement I've got rights as well. When you get a person in a dismissal or disciplinary case, people stand up against the whites. But before they wouldn't do that. They refuse to speak English, they will talk their mother tongue, and tell you translate for this white man and tell him what am I saying. So there has been a lot of opening up of minds and of people knowing what they deserve and what they can achieve in their lives.

Facilitator: Is there anything that you think is important that I didn't ask which should have been part of this interview and you have not mentioned it?

Respondent: I think I've covered a lot, if there's anything I will put in writing and send to you

Facilitator: thanks very much for your time

END

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