

Maggie Carolisen

LRC Oral History Project

20th August 2008

(This interview is incomplete...)

Int This is an interview with Maggie Carolisen and it's the 20th August 2008. Maggie, on behalf of SALS Foundation in the United States, we really want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the LRC Oral History Project. I wondered if we could start the interview if you could talk about your early childhood memories, growing up in South Africa under apartheid, and where you think your sense of social justice and injustice developed?

MC Ja. I was born in District Six, it's in Phillip Street, and we then moved afterwards to Bloemhof Flats and then, of course, in the sixties it...the whole area was declared...*(I'm very emotional, sorry)*.

Int It's ok.

MC ...was declared a white area. And...but, it wasn't until the eighties, that we were finally forcibly removed from District Six. We were...what was intended to be the coloured homeland, Mitchells Plain. So, I still live in Mitchells Plain in the house that my parents moved to.

Int Gosh!

MC I didn't initially move with them, because I was so angry. I was angry as a child because, living in District Six, my mother, who's a very simple woman, you know, when you walked on the pavement, and whites came towards you on the pavement, she would step off and pull us, as children, off the pavement. Not every parent did that, but my mother was servile to white people, and that had some impact on me. Subconsciously, because it wasn't...didn't think much of it, really. It is only when I was in my teenage years and I...yes, I was taken out of school to go and work because we were having financial difficulties. And so, and there I was asked to come and join the Sports Club by one of our colleagues. And it's only once I was in the Sports Club that this development of social justice really worked in me, because we had...we were fighting then, at the time, to have the sports boycotts. You know there was the sanctions, but, there was still sports teams coming to South Africa, the rebel teams, and, I was a very angry person. The fact that I had to move...we had to leave our home and to go thirty kilometres outside of the city, and you have to travel to the city every day. And so, yes. *(Pause)*. I must say that what I felt, my family did not feel the same way. I seemed to...I often used to question myself that I am odd in this family, the odd one out. In fact, when it came to the '94 elections, my eldest brother, I was so shocked, I was at his home in Grassy Park, and he said to me: I benefited from apartheid, I don't know why you are so ANC, and for the black man. 'I benefit from apartheid', he was married at the time, also living in District Six, living with his in-laws on a room, married with one child, and when...You see, to get people to move out of...out of Cape Town, they enticed you with low rentals, because when we

moved to Mitchells Plain, the rentals were low, yes...with low rentals and assisted with low deposits in buying homes. Grassy Park was under the Divisional Council and so they had to buy the homes, but for very little deposit and very low monthly payments. So today he owns his house and he's very proud of that, and he tells me it's because of apartheid. And I just can't see the rationale there. He says if that didn't happen he would not have had a home, his own home. And...so you see we're at the different ends of the political spectrum, my...not all my family. I'm happy to say that my mother and father, who were...my whole family was apolitical, except for me being a little radical because of my sports. And because of the sports, we belonged to SACOS sport, which is the South African Council of Sport, whose slogan was 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'. And, yes, I was very hard core, hard line, I was secretary of my club and I was treasurer of my union. And so, we adopted the SACOS policy within our club constitution. Our club was full of teachers who spoke politics all the time and they...they were the fighters to have the SACOS policy included in our Constitution. But when it came to implementing, I found...because it's your friends now, what it meant was that if...we had nothing to do with permit systems, we were boycotting everything wherever you needed to. We were living in apartheid, and to go to a hotel you needed, well, we...people didn't know that, this was being done quietly, that the hotel needed to have a permit to allow people of colour to come there. You could come and eat there, but you could not dance, or you could not stay over. So that was the quiet...um...don't know how to put it...of apartheid, that wasn't visible. We boycotted the venues, I've never been to the Baxter, only now recently, and all these spor...lovely sports grounds around, we boycotted all of those through the SACOS sport. And, of course, if your child went to a white school, that was a no-no. And, in our club was...the one member whose child went to a white school, and I'd been in this meeting and it was at...in a board meeting, and this had been raised and our delegate, reporting back to the club, did not raise it, and then I pointed it out, and, of course, I became the villain. Because this lady, I didn't mention names, I just spoke about it, we're not allowed to send our children to white schools, and all those teachers who had fought for the SACOS...I cannot forget this, because I became a villain, and she resigned in the next meeting. She was not going to take her child out of the school, and so she resigned. So that was the SACOS thing. I started working at the LRC in the eighties, 1984, in August...

Int Before you go on to that, I'm just curious...did you manage to finish school...what was...?

MC No, I didn't because we were poor, we were still living in the city.

Int You mean in District Six?

MC In District Six, yes. I went to Harold Cressy High, there the teachers spoke a bit of...ja...but it was the New Unity Movement. SACOS was also, I learnt afterwards, part of the New Unity Movement, and only afterwards, even then, being in SACOS, I was...I was not totally aware, because only afterwards I realised that SACOS is actually just coloured people. When are we going into the townships? But you needed a permit to get into the townships, coloured people couldn't go into townships, only there...But this...this was a slow awakening later, later, much later. And I went to

school, I was in standard nine, half-way through, when my mother said...well, I'd...she just said to me over the weekend, I...Monday you're not going to school, I got you a job. And I had to go work in the factory, in Maitland. So I cried and cried and cried. My father tried to talk my mother out of this, but...My two brothers were already working, but, you know, the money was very, very little, they earned very little. My parents were just cleaners, they came and cleaned the offices here, they walked. I used to think, you know, even though it stormed, they walked from where we lived, which was quite a distance, down to the city, to come and clean the offices. So that people, when they come in at seven, or whatever time, it was clean, and they have left already. So, you can imagine, it's four o'clock, five o'clock when they walk, whether it's sun or rain or whatever, they walked down to the city to come and do that work. So, I started working, I had to leave school, but I wasn't happy in this factory, and as soon as I could I got a job at a law firm. And I worked there for thirteen years.

Int Which law firm was it?

MC (Inaudible) & Liebenberg. I worked there until they...it's not because...you know there was job reservation at the time, we couldn't work as secretaries, they...we worked...they employed you as a clerk, but, you found that you actually did the work of secretaries. But, the lawyers had their secretaries who were all whites, so there was this job reservation that we encountered, and there was...it's very...I found Commercial Law firms very...still very conservative. Well, I haven't been in it for so many years so I can't say now. But, up till that time they were very conservative, you would pass the director in the corridor and you would greet him, and he would not return the greeting, and you could never become a secretary or recognised and get paid the...a secretary's wage. But, ja, I think I worked more like a paralegal, I...eventually I was running the Magistrate's Courts Department at (inaudible & Liebenberg and then, they were merging with Sonnenberg. Sonnenberg was in this building incidentally, on the fifth floor at the time. And then I wasn't certain if there was going to be jobs for everybody because Sonnenberg was a big firm, we were a smaller firm. And although I was...ja...I was reassured there would be jobs for everybody, I left. I then went to work for a firm in Athlone, I had to take...low as my wages was, I had to take a cut in wages, because black firms struggled to exist, their overheads were high. I also had to travel from city to Athlone now, which I did. Luckily I had...I was fortunate to save up and have a car. So, I used to drive through and...ja. And it's...there you worked...you had to work on a Saturday, I didn't like working on a Saturday because of my sport, you had to work the morning, you got the Wednesday afternoon off. And so, in that law firm, whereas I was in the white law firm, I was confined to the Magistrate's Court Department, in the coloured law firm, you had to do everything, conveyancing, the litigation, even the rental collections, and I did the banking. Oh, I did banking also at the white law firm, and I had to fill in a fee book in the white law firm, and all those things I also did in the coloured law firm, but, just, you were better rounded off, you learnt all these skills in the coloured law firm. And they also had like, a building society which had to be manned on a Saturday and we had to take turns, so I also became a teller. And I didn't like the end of the week because the weekly wages had to be paid, and you couldn't make mistakes. You had lists of people's names and you had to pay out their monies that were paid directly into the bank accounts. After that...that's where I worked with Sarah...and

Sarah had left, I had left there, I said to myself, no, I must come back to the city. And Sarah then 'phoned me once, now, it was about a couple of months or a year later...

Int ...And you'd been unemployed, or you were still working?

MC No, I've always, always, always working...

Int So, you were working at the law firm?

MC Still in the law firm, and then I came to another law firm in the city, also a small law firm, and I was there about eighteen months when I had a call from Sarah, who said: Maggie, I'm pregnant and I have to leave, and Shehnaz is looking for a secretary, we will be advertising the job, but, if you're interested please come, you won't regret it. And my...I said to Sarah: no, Sarah, man, I don't like changing jobs, I'm not here too long and I don't want...and now...Sarah probably won't remember saying this but, this has stuck with me throughout. Her words were: Maggie, once you work at the LRC, you would never want to work for another law firm again. And how true that words were. When I came here I thought I knew everything, I didn't know Public Interest Law. It was a education, it's still an education, I'm open to learning all the time. I found the environment, the working environment totally different. People were friendly and caring...I'm talking about the lawyers here, there was no...you didn't feel that hierarchy that you get in the conservative law firms, you must know your place. But here, whether you were white or black or whatever, you were almost like family, and that environment really had a impact on me. And of course, my sports was carrying on.

Int So you were still playing?

MC I was playing hockey, yes. But, of course, we were the non-racial, very hard line. There was no black or...there was no grey areas, it's either black or white in terms of...in terms of principles, ja. And I was very rigid, ja, I was very rigid, I am more flexible these days, (*laughter*), I've mellowed quite a bit but I used to be very hard line. So, surely I was also anti-drinking at the time because my father drank a lot and when he drank he was abusive. So, I've grown up also in a bit of an abusive home, abusive in physical abuse. My mother...

Int ...Was it to your mom or to everyone?

MC Mostly to my mother, but, yes, to us also. So, yes, every weekend was...I used to hate Christmas and I used to hate the holiday periods, because then he would stock up on the drinks and it was always tension. And I swore I'm going to get out of this house as soon as I could. So, when the family moved to Mitchells Plain, because I had these close friendships in my club and in the union with...three of us moved in and we shared a house. So, I moved out and my mother wasn't happy at all, it was thrown in my face that I put my friends first. You know, they were simple folk, they expected

their children to see to their...to the home. And I used to argue, that's not the reason to have children, you must learn to let go. But, they could never grasp or understand that and...but, I supported them, because eventually they were alone and my brothers got married; I had a younger brother. I had two older brothers, one younger sister, and she moved to Australia, it's about twenty-two years ago, and I've got a younger brother. So, what else do you need to know? Oh, now the politics, still on the politics. When it came to the nineties, the ANC was in exile, well, I was at the start of the UDF also...

Int You mean the eighties?

MC In the eighties when the UDF launched in Rocklands in Mitchells Plain, I was at the launch, just as an observer, I was interested in the politics of the day, and, yes, it was exciting times. I remember one time, I was so frightened, when we went to a meeting in Bellville, it was in a church hall, on the church grounds, and (Allan) Boesak was saying: I want you to just keep calm, I've been notified that the police is outside, we are going to move out of here in a calm manner...but, ooh, I was shivering in my boots. The eighties was a very volatile time. You know, the struggle was waged on different fronts, and I like to think that I played a role in the sports, not so much in the political front, but in the sports, which was part of the politics of the day. Because when the rebel tours...there was now these sanctions and South Africa was black-listed, teams are not supposed to come here, but, the rebel tours still came, and what we then did was to go and disrupt those matches. If it was tennis, we'd go run onto the field, or, whatever sport it was, we would go and disrupt the matches. And then in the early nineties it...the ANC was in exile and they were calling the business people to Lusaka and Harare, the sports people and...I didn't go there, but friends of mine went and came back with a message to say that they were going to go into negotiations, and the different levels of society, like the sports, had to move along with the process. It didn't sit well with me, they're telling us we must go and talk with the establishment, the white people, sport. I couldn't handle that at first, and SACOS refused to move along with that. And so, it was necessary then to form the...another sports body, it was the National Sports Congress, it was the sports arm of the ANC, and it was all SACOS people who broke away from SACOS, and I joined up with them. There was a meeting in Johannesburg, and then we had to come to our areas and we had to develop sport. It was very difficult. Western Cape was a coloured area, a majority area, and the sports all was SACOS, heavily SACOS. The people I was living with in the house, remained in SACOS and I moved, it caused these high tensions; friends, family, became almost like enemies and there I learnt the other side. It brought me back to that young woman who had to leave the club because of her child, the ostracism of that time, I now experienced, belonging to the NSC. I couldn't understand...are they too blind to see that we had to move? I'm talking now about the SACOS people. That we have to move with the time, there is this shift that...even though it was difficult for me, I was at least...but I think it's because I was working at the LRC. And the LRC, for me, was like a whole education all the time. When I started here, you know, even though we lived in Cape Town, and we read about the bulldozers bulldozing down the shacks and moving black people out to the Eastern Cape, they had formed this Bantustans there, and they were moving the people there, because Cape Town was to be a coloured preferential area in terms of, first the whites and then the coloured, and hardly any blacks. That's why that time there was very little housing for blacks, only in Langa and in Gugulethu, Nyanga. And...but even

though I was aware of that, that was far removed because I did not witness it personally. But, working here and...when I started in 1984, probably all our work was on the Pass Laws, fighting the Pass Laws, and I came into cont...well, coming for my interview, ooh, they questioned my background in...I had to come for a second...it's now the job interview, I was recalled for a second interview...

Int This is at the LRC?

MC At the LRC. And I thought, what is this, a political background that they're looking for? But, I was questioned about how I felt about black people, and I had no problem with black people. I talked about my fights in the sport and that, I think that's what got me the job. (*Laughter*). It's only later that I discovered why they had to screen people, because later I learnt that our 'phones had been bugged by Security Police. It was in 1988...

Int Really?

MC ...that I had gone...I had gone to visit my sister in Australia, and in that time...that was...we had the KTC case when they had burned down these three camps, oh, it was volatile times that time. In my absence they had picked up Nolitha, and I'm not sure Marian, but, they had been listening in on the conversations. And so, that's why...and then it dawned on me, the screening of the staff, at that time...maybe it's just my perception, I don't know, but, at my interview I wondered why were they so interested in my background.

Int Did they...when you say they picked up...you mean the Security Police detained Nolitha?

MC (*nodding?*)

Int Gosh! Ok.

MC But, rather let her tell you herself.

Int Sure.

MC But, that had happened, because when I came back she was not in the office, and I had put up a picture on my notice board, and I'd written under it "lest we forget" because she was sitting...they had moved her from police station to police station. This is what they did so people couldn't find their relatives. So, that they could keep people without trial and...ja...they moved you around all the time. But, like, coming back to now...to my personal growth. But, when I started here it was the Pass Laws, and I can still quote but I don't know what Sections it is any more, but, you had to be born here, and lived continuously for ten years, to enable you to stay in Cape Town, or, if

you worked here, you had to continuously work here for fifteen years. But, what they did is, they mo...they...the agents of the companies went down to the Bantustans and they signed up the males, mostly males, that's why we had the male hostels here, also in Langa, and sign them up for one year and at November I think it was, the contract ended and they had to go back, and they argued that that was a break in the contract, it wasn't a continuous fifteen years. And I think it's the Johannesburg office that the Rikhoto case...that was a watershed case, and I found that the LRC always was looking for impact cases like the Rikhoto case, and I was very intrigued and interested in all, then, it was like a new world opening to me. Because, even though I knew black people, about the Pass Laws, here I was almost not experiencing it, but, you know, there's empathy and there's compassion, there's personal growth, the spiritual growth in one, and that's why I find that...those words of Sarah so...so profound that you never would want to work in another law firm. And I've loved law, I didn't...Chantel (Fortuin) asked me once, and why didn't I then study further? I was too wrapped up, I was more in sports, my love is for sport rather than the career. Yes. Was there anything else you need to know?

Int So, I'm just wondering, when you said that you loved law, did you think that the law could actually be an instrument of social justice?

MC Oh I was witnessing it here at the LRC.

Int Ok. But, prior to coming to the LRC, did you think that?

MC No, I never thought that. My...my...like I say for thirteen years with (inaudible & Liebenberg), was confined to debt collection. I didn't see that aspects of the law, and then there was no real, like I say, my focus was more on sport, than on social justice then. Social justice through sport, that is how I saw it. I see sport as a unifying factor, but, I'm disappointed today, even though we started the NSC, we launched here in Langa, the national body, and there were people like Percy Sonn, Alec Alexander, I mean, people that was in the legal fields. Our meetings was held at Ginwala & Alexander in Athlone; it was a law firm, and in the evenings, on a Tuesday and Thursday, after the office had shut down, then we would come together...the NSC people who were starting up the NSC...and we would have it in their reception area in Athlone, that is how the NSC started, out of a law firm. So, there was a lot of legal people, there was a lot of professional people in the NSC, because it was politics, we were creating another political structure, another arm of the ANC, but the sports arm. And social justice, yes, it's only at the LRC that I was really exposed. I...we did a lot of delictual claims, police brutality, and farm workers who were subjected to terrible beatings by farmers...that had a great impact on me. In fact, Steve (Kahanovitz) still has a matter, the Engelbrecht matter, was where a farm worker was...he lost his leg, and eventually, after a few years, they won the claim. But, I think what people do, or the owners do, they transfer their assets, and so he had no assets at the time even though he was a farmer. He had no assets and so the man was never paid, and the file is...all these years it's still open, I'm saying: Steve (Kahanovitz), we need to close this file. But, he's hoping...every few years that he makes a inquiry into the man's background, the owner at the time, to see if he has any assets. Is there any other questions?

Int So, in terms of working at the Legal Resources Centre, you've been here for twenty four years, so, you came when it was about one year old, and was Lee...who was the Regional Director at the time...?

MC Oh, it was like a absentee, it was Richard Rosenthal, when I started, Lee (Bozalek) had just also started there but he was an attorney, he had been a director at Mallinicks before, he'd been a partner or director in Mallinicks, ja. He had just started there and I was there, I went to work for Shehnaz (Meer). At that time we had one lawyer...one secretary to a lawyer, but, over the years, we've...as we've grown, we've had to work for more than one lawyer. I currently work for three or four, but, it may sound a lot but it's...Henk (Smith) does a lot of his own typing, (Angela) Andrews does a lot of own. I work with Chantel (Fortuin) and I work with Steve (Kahanovitz), and I love it because of the diversity of...because if I didn't work in...with them then I wouldn't get a sense of what the LRC was doing. And so Steve (Kahanovitz) is in housing, I'm learning all...I learn all the time about the new laws; Henk (Smith) there is now busy with the Minerals and Petroleum Act, that he's going to this morning. But, I don't learn so much from him because he works on his own a lot. Angela (Andrews) is the environment lawyer. I used to think the environment is just a white thing (*laughter*). I had never given it a thought, the environment, but, when she worked on the pebble bed with Adrian, from the Durban office, the pebble bed nuclear reactor, ja, it was such a huge case, yes. That was a eye-opener, I still learned here to appreciate...I love the outdoors, but I took it for granted previously. I didn't think of global warming and all those kind of things, but, I learnt all that here and, yes, it's had an impact. I now preach (*laughs*), preach about global warming, and I must say it has rubbed off on family, friends, and so the message spreads. What else do you need to know?

Int Tell me about how things have changed in your time...since you started to now, in terms of organisational dynamics, gender, race, all those kinds of issues, what's...what are some of the challenges, each office has its own challenge, what are the Cape Town office's challenges?

MC Yes. You know in 1986 was...as I said was volatile times, the government, in collusion with black people who they had co-opted, the Witdoeke, they wore these white bands around their faces so that the Security Forces could identify who's their people and who's the enemy. And they burnt down three camps in KTC. When that happened, the people had nowhere to go, they were camped in our...we were still in the old building...

Int Scott House.

MC Scott House, yes, and they stayed that whole weekend, I remember while the camps was burning, we were taking statements, and I learnt about team work. It didn't matter whether I worked for William, or, for whoever, all the secretaries came in, we...at that time it had big rooms so the three secretaries sat in one, and Chris Nicholson who was the Director of...

Int The Durban office.

MC ...the Durban office, he was an advocate, he had come down that weekend and he was strutting up and down between the desks, urging us to get done, and we had to type on typewriters. We had to type the statements, the people were sitting, camped out in the boardroom, was full of people, the whole place was full of people. And we had Paul (Pretorius)...then the case started, Matthew Walton was the attorney, I worked with him at the time...well him...I worked with him and with Shehnaz (Meer) at the time. And Matthew Walton was in the office and so it was his case. They had to second help, so they got Steve (Kahanovitz) from the Johannesburg office, and Paul Pretorius who was a advocate, he also came down to work on the case. And there's where I learnt about team work, and I think...we've lost that along the way. It didn't matter if it was my attorney or your attorney, if the work needed to be done you did it, and Clinton Light was a Fellow in the office, and him and his girlfriend came in that day...that weekend with the big pots of soup, not only for the staff but for the people, so that we could not be distracted to...we had to get these...And once that was done, I think (Chris) Nicholson then went back to his office and then the team was appointed. We also got Marian Fullard, she came from UCT; there was a specific task that she had...

Int And were these two women in this...unit, at UCT?

MC Yes, but Marian (Fullard) was in our office, there was space made for her. I think she did the statistics on the KTC case. And my job, when the lawyers were in the...at the trial, I had to listen to the police radios, and the trans...and I had to type up, like, transcripts, and from there they looked at the pattern. And doing that also, you know, I became so deeply aware of how privileged, even though we were all disadvantaged, but how privileged we are, even today. To get to my home, I have to go past informal settlements and I have such a sense of anger, still. When I walk on the Mouille Point, because that is where I would have loved to have stayed, because I love the sea, I love to swim, I love the sea. When we stayed in District Six, the only place you could go to was one area on Sea Point, for people of colour...coloured people, we didn't see black people at the time, going to the beach. There was a pool near to the pavilion...Sunrise, I think it was, it's the only place we could go, or else we went to Simonstown. Because the beaches that they designated for people of colour was all where the rip tides were, all the best beaches were in whites and you're not allowed to go there, you could not walk on the sand. I remember at sunrise in...at Muizenberg, also a white area, but there's a big parking area and then there's a long stretch of beach and then you get Strandfontein, and the chairperson of our hockey board had overseas visitors and she had taken them just to...and the police had to remove them, because they were coloured. I remember reading about in the Strand area, where a pregnant woman had taken a short cut across the beach, and she was put in a police van because she was coloured. And all those kind of things had a great impact on me. But, coming back to the dynamics in the Cape Town office. That seed of teamwork was growing in me, and I thought we were a bit like one big happy family, we helped one another, if the one secretary was too busy we would help, but, that has...Because also, I suppose, when we moved to this building, we were in our separate areas, we were no longer in this communal kind of...kind of...and we were also growing. The dynamics have

changed, the screening of the people is no longer relevant and...so, yes, so...and then also there's the different personalities in terms of the lawyers. There are some difficult lawyers. But, I've told myself, you spend most of your time at work, so it's for me to adapt, I can't change that person, but I can change the way I think. So, I adapt to each...each lawyer is different, and I adapt myself to each situation. Not everybody does that, and I try and preach that to some, but, it doesn't or it falls on deaf ears sometimes. We all want to be number one.

Int (Laughter). You know Maggie, the Cape Town office has a reputation for having staff who stay for a very long time, unlike, for example, the Jo'burg office...Johannesburg office, and the other thing is that the Cape Town office also has a reputation of having lots and lots of white lawyers.

MC Yes.

Int There was a time when it wasn't like that, with Chantel Fortuin and Vincent Saldanha, etc, but those people aren't...Vincent's left and so it's now back to what it might have been fourteen years ago...

MC Uh huh.

Int What's your sense...?

MC ...You're talking politics with me now?

Int Yes. What's your sense of what's going on, is that...is it a concern to you, or, do...?

MC ...Of course, it's a concern. It's been a concern for very, many years. People...I always get this...like I say, I'm filled with anger mostly...I love this word anger, but then I rationalise and I tell myself...even admin staff here, they fight over what, to me, is petty issues, money, we don't earn enough...I think we earn...we get good salaries, I think so. So, why I say that, I always think of...because I go past these black people living in squatter camps, informal settlements, and I think of how poor they are, and maybe sometimes...and this is what we see in the work that we do, that often that...that old age pension is the only income, and I tell myself: if that Gogo can cope with that money...stretch it, then I must stretch what I earn. The LRC is funded, it's not about good salaries, and so on, and even when I hear the lawyers going on about money, money, money, then I think then why don't you leave, you've got the degree, why don't you go into private practice, but I know they want to do Public Interest Law. So, yes, but I don't worry myself too much about that. But, that has been the dynamics, it has been a worry, and often, we also feel...what we perceive sometimes to be racism.

Int What are some of the things that make you perceive racism?

MC They shout...it's the way they address you, some of them are not...I always say not everybody...not every teacher is meant to teach. You would...should be able...I feel there should be some criteria that you can carry over, and teach. And the same, I think, is in every...in every job situation. Often, I find that some lawyers are not able to give an instruction properly, but they expect you to know what they want. They know exactly in their mind what they want, but they cannot convey it to you, so...And then you're made to be the scapegoat because we are the lowest on the rung. I don't know, white lawyers have become comfortable here? I'm not so certain. I can be very outspoken, and I'm not sure if I should be saying these things.

Int Well, some of it...you can edit it.

MC Ja. One thing I love about the LRC is that, this is what I never had in a conservative law firm, we were not allowed to, or, we were too scared to raise issues because of the conservative environment we worked in, and the...and the fact that they just ignored you. We didn't feel, in those law firms, that we could go to...to the human resource person even, with anything. But, here, when it was Lee (Bozalek), when he was the director, oh, I was saying, first of all it was Richard Rosenthal, and then Lee (Bozalek). So, I've worked under all the directors in the Cape Town office. And then when Lee (Bozalek)...Lee (Bozalek) had such a lot of patience. When it came to evaluation or increase time, he would sit you down and he'd have this discussion, and you could speak your mind with Lee, and he would sit and he would listen and he would say to me: Maggie you've given me, like, a very good argument, but in the end (*laughter*), he listens and then right fine, nothing happens, but, at least, you could speak your mind. And that is what I found in the LRC. Before, we used to have, like, general meetings, and whether it was a lawyer or not, I don't know if I just took advantage of my age, but, I would say what I wanted to say. But that has been me in every walk of life, whether it was in the sport, whether it's in the church, or whether wherever, if something needs to be said, and it's a principle, I'm very strong on principle.

Int Do you think that the LRC has changed over the years, in terms of the number of people that come here from the community, off the streets, compared...I'm talking now about the Cape Town office?

MC Yes, yes. Especially the Cape Town office, I think the focus has changed almost...almost entirely to the refugee. I used to voice my opinion: where's our people? Where's the South Africans...are not coming here any more. But, then it is...the legal dynamics have changed, where they didn't have the access before, there's now other NGOs, and there's other law clinics, and there is the Legal Aid Board...have become more accessible. Even though I still have a big criticism, that it's mainly Criminal Law, and it's...all the money's going to men, because they're the main transgressors of the law, and not enough is spent on women. My view is that they should help women, just because it's a criminal matter it shouldn't...the focus shouldn't just be on criminal matters, but, they should help women also, and children...other kind of law. That is the Legal Aid Board. But, like I say, that is how...my understanding is why we don't get all the...and then we've become...focus work. Certain categories of work at...we did everything before, and now we've got the

focus work, to fall in line with our funding. And yes, and then I see now the lawyers have become specialised in...like Steve (Kahanovitz) in housing, Lee (Bozalek) William (Kerfoot) in the refugee work and Henk (Smith) and Kobus (Pienaar) in land and...Chantel (Fortuin) was women, but Chantel did lots of other work too, but mainly the women. I'm very strong on women's issues, children's rights and women's rights.

Int I'm wondering also, Maggie, you've worked with a range of lawyers and directors, who's been the...your favourite person that you've worked with. I know that's difficult but who's been the one that you...?

MC I loved working with Matthew Walton, Matthew was very clear, Matthew was very...you just got the sense he's a nice, sincere person, and as our work evolved, he became more...he did a lot of the work himself. He was...when you work for more than one person there's lawyers who try and make your light...load a little lighter, by doing things themselves, but, then you have certain white males who still feel the need that the secretary must do everything. And...Chantel (Fortuin), I liked working with Chantel. I didn't work with Lee (Bozalek) personally, he was my director, he was very nice to work...I mean, it's nice...all of them, to have them in the office, but there is a strong personality, three in the office at the moment that causes distentions (*dissensions*).

Int Three personalities at the moment, here?

MC Been here for a long time.

Int Right.

MC Mm. That causes distentions (*dissensions*). You know, sometimes you get the sense that...even though there's this culture that the lawyers know there's things that's not right, we have no...we did have the power to change things, we, the admin staff. I also worked with Ricardo Wyngaard, and he'd once asked me to type up...copy-type the LRC Constitution because they were going to amend it. And I said to him: Ricardo, everything here about the lawyers is the LRC, where's the admin staff, there's nothing in the Constitution about the admin...And he said to me: you are nothing! That was his words.

Int Gosh!

MC He said: you are nothing! The lawyers is the LRC. And if you look at the Constitution that is what it says. And when you go to the AGMs, in the beginning...but this is how the dynamic about the LRC. We, as admin staff, in the eighties, we got the sense that we...we...that's the support staff, that, whom is representing our rights there? You have the Directors...all the lawyers...all the lawyers and the candidate attorneys go to the AGM and they come back with a new...yes, a new path for the next year. And we felt that: where's...who's our voice? And we had to fight for representation at the

AGM, I remember. I went as a rep for the admin staff to these meetings, and then the admin would have a slot, independent...the...in the...the different office staff would get together, and in our discussion we felt that we needed to have a slot at the AGM and also at the Exco meetings. And it was a hard fight because lawyers was against it, we were told in no uncertain terms, by a lawyer in the PE office, I'm not going to say where he is today (*laughs*), that you are nothing, what do you want, the LRC is...the lawyers is the LRC. But eventually, we got the slot. And then, we got the slot...on Exco, yes, and that slot what was usually taken by a person in Johannesburg office because Exco meetings at the time was up there. And then the lawyers were on this knot system, seniors got paid that, and then you got the new lawyers coming in, and there was this big discrepancy, and the junior lawyers were fighting for rights and they also didn't have a slot. So, they convinced this admin staff, we had called a meeting...I was the only person that warned against it, if we give...if admin gives...if they want it, there should not be...why should admin have a slot and lawyers don't have a slot? And so they said that it should be a staff representative, and the admin...I find that the admin here, they want you to fight their battles, always want someone to fight their battles, so, it was nice to have a lawyer fight their battle, even if it was a junior lawyer. So, they opted, voted and they opted to...instead of just having an admin slot they have it as a staff representative. I remember distinctly warning our admin staff, this is not going to last, they were fighting, they had their own agenda, they were fighting for a better salary. And that my words came true. Today there is no staff representative any more, it's just fallen through, nobody wanted to take it forward. There was, later, a few years ago, Chantel (Fortuin) was still the director, and we had an admin meeting, and the staff was bemoaning the fact that admin has no voice, and they felt we should revive this. Chantel said we should revive this and they wanted me to take the fight forward. I refused. She gave me a directive that I must contact the other offices and feel out...feel what they...what the feeling is in the LRC. I made it quite clear that I'm prepared to do that, but that's as far as it go, but I am not taking this fight forward because I warned you people. And so I sent everybody an email, they all responded, they were all interested, but nobody was prepared to take the fight forward, and I was...I had grown tired...sometimes you feel you're being used. When it suits them to fight the battle, but once the battle is over, then, ja, the interest wanes. As for the dynamics in the office, I think the white male environment is overpowering when black lawyers come here, especially junior ones. I mean...my personal (*please, this is confidential*) my personal view is that Charlene (May) was a candidate attorney before, and the post became available and she was appointed, but my view is that they still treat her almost like a candidate attorney, still. And I think that has been how it's been with whoever. I don't think it's a very welcoming...because it's usually black lawyers that come here as junior than what...they're all senior lawyers, so...and I've even argued, because that time we used to have the...all general meeting, everybody present, when...with the junior lawyers fighting for their wage increase, my voice was there too. My view was that, if you have worked in this field for three or five years, how can you still be a junior? Yes, that other lawyer's worked eight years, but, what is the difference? After a year, after two years, after three years, the work is the same. So, why must we have this knot system? And I felt...and this is where I feel the racism come in...the directors used to get...when they become a director, in addition to their salary as a lawyer, they used to get a director's fee. But when...we saw now the need to appoint a black person, as a director...

- Int You mean National Director, or Regional?
- MC Well, I can't speak for National, I can only speak from the Regional. The...they worked...the whole LRC worked to change that ruling, that once you cease being...but that firstly, those white directors are still getting that extra money, but, when the black director...the law changed...the rules changed. That once you cease being the director you forego the director's fee.
- Int But that's only for black, or is it for everyone?
- MC Now, since that time...
- Int Really, it's been...
- MC ...but you must know, we were now moving to a time when we had to show equity, transformation, and so, we were moving towards getting...because the directors all used to be white...to people of colour, to black lawyers. And that, to me, tells me that, despite working here at the LRC, these white lawyers, it tells me something about them. That when their personal positions are at risk or threat, that...ja.
- Int Maggie, due to the time, I'm wondering whether we could stop at this point, and I'd like to continue at a later date...
- MC Sure...
- Int Thank you so much...

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