

Jacky Mabeba

Facilitator: This is an interview with comrade Jacky Mabeba, we are in Botshabelo, the date is 29 June 2011, interview is done by Brown Maaba. Comrade, thanks for your time. I know you had other things to attend to, I greatly appreciate the time you have given me. Kindly give me a background as to where you were born, how you were raised and how you ended up in union activities?

Respondent: My name is Jacky Mabeba, I am originally from Soweto in Phiri, that's where I was born and raised with a little part of my life raised also in Limpopo, but before I came down to Botshabelo in 1990, I started working in Jo'burg, firstly I worked at Wits, doing gardening, it was a temporary job. Then I left Wits around 1984/85, I still remember it was during the height of the struggle and I moved to another factory where they manufactured hand gloves, that was around 1986/87 and while I was working there that's when I became involved in trade unionism.

Facilitator: How did it happen, at Wits were you not involved?

Respondent: At Wits I was not involved although I was somehow involved in youth activities from the township, but nothing to do with labour matters, it was only when I got employment in that factory that I became involved in trade unionism, and that was simply because of the work situation, the conditions were not favourable. We were recruited, organised into a union which was called South African Textile and Allied Workers Union. It was a formation of South African and Allied Workers Union. That was the biggest union which was very political, during those

years you would have three camps. We had what was called the Sweetheart unions which were more favoured by the employers because they were given the close shop agreements and all that, they believed in issues only that relates to workers at the factory floor, no politics, nothing. Then you would have the other section of unions which were called the chararists, those were unions which were more into COSATU even though at that stage it was not yet formed, but they in SAWU, it was the vehicle that brought about COSATU. And you would have these other unions which belonged to NACTU, I think they were called the workarists and all that.

So we were recruited into the unions that fall under SAWU. I think I worked about two years in that factory, because of my activism, although I was not a shop steward but I was kind of a relaying belt in between the union offices and the workers and I was still young, obviously still energetic. So I got more involved up until .., I think, I'm not sure whether I resigned or I was dismissed, I can't remember clearly. I ended up working very closely with the union, you know visiting the union offices and then obviously working in there, but during those years, it was more voluntary. You would go for three months, you would go for six months just volunteering and getting nothing, but obviously you would get monies from the union subscriptions, at that stage it was something like R1, for transport, workers would help you with money for transport and food and all that. So it was not really full time work, or where we began to be regularly paid, it was when SATAWU got into merger discussions with .., a clothing union which was in the former description of the sweetheart unions, that union was in Cape Town and Durban. So we got into discussions with them, I think it was 1987/88 under the banner of COSATU, one union one industry and all that. So we went into discussions and merged. Around 1988/9, when we

completed the merger and that's when we started to get paid regularly. It then become an employment obviously. We worked through, in the clothing industry, we were now focussing on the clothing industry. We obviously had a lot of workers belonging to the bargaining councils and all that, up until in 1990, obviously from 1989 the .., as we were building branches and all that, there was a feeling or a research that says we have these other places, the former Bantustan areas, Ciskei, some were in Durban also, in Kimberley, in Botshabelo, in Qwaqwa, in Harrismith, you had these Bantustan areas where there is a huge number of workers which are unorganised and the factories there mostly its clothing and Chinese employers and so on. Now because of, at that time, I was almost like the only person in the area, in Jo'burg amongst the young people who was able to speak Sesotho. I was recommended to come down to the Free State, this part of Botshabelo so that we can begin to organise, already we were doing casual visits because we were sort of like determining where there was feasibility of trade unionism establishment in here, so there were some other comrades around this area who were already organising workers, although without a formidable trade union but just helping. Although one of them has passed away, it's Teboho Melthaf and the other one who is still alive, Seiso Mohae who is the Provincial MEC for Finance currently, those were the people that we were working with in the trade union. At this stage, after the merger, it was called SACTU, South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union. I came down here with another comrade and his name was Sixelo Ndevu, he is in Eastern Cape, I think he worked for about two years from 1990.

Facilitator: were you willing to relocate?

Respondent: I mean I was reluctant, I mean you can imagine at that time, 1989, I'm supposed to have come down here and that's when Sisulu and Kathrada were getting released and the political climate was like interesting, so in 1990 there was Mandela. I was a bit reluctant but I said okay let me somehow give it six months, go there, establish a branch and then along the way I will come back, but it couldn't happen because of the challenges I met when I arrived here were challenging – I didn't want to pull out having grown under the guidance of the trade union movement, people who sacrificed a lot for the trade union movement. People like Jay Naidoo, Jabu Gwala, Sydney Mufamadi, and all that, I worked with a lot of them, and I learnt a lot from them, Uro Muzwane, who has passed on, Caesar Njikelana who is now an MP. So I felt that now I couldn't just leave. I started recruiting and here I am after almost 17 years.

Facilitator: what were those challenges?

Respondent: The challenges, firstly the workers as I said were not organised into a formation, a trade union which will speak directly to their working conditions, that's the first one. The second one, the working conditions were very horrible, nothing ..., if you speak of the labour rights, those did not exist, those Chinese knew nothing, let alone the language problem, they couldn't speak their language, companies had no rules and regulations, a supervisor or manager will supervise and manage out of his own thinking with no guidelines, nothing written. People would not get proper wage pay slips, people would work like for two weeks, they were actually getting paid fortnightly basis, most of them, you would have one or two in a factory getting paid monthly, but most, throughout this industrial area, workers were getting paid on a fortnightly basis, you would

have people working for two weeks not getting paid and this would be on the basis that they are being trained and all that. Workers had nowhere to go when they had problems. There were two offices, government offices ..., a white office, it was a provincial offices, they called it Department of Developmental Aid (DDA), the former, the previous government under the Bantustan and you would have the other one which was called STK which is now FDC, these were the offices where workers would go if they had a problem. They were not labour department offices, they were simply, if you take for instance FDC which was called STK, it was an Afrikaans name. They were looking after the infrastructure, the factories, they had a section whereby they would go out to China, market the infrastructure and get the Chinese to invest, and it was also a channel where the central government was giving them the money to subsidise the Chinese factories. I know for a fact that there were companies, especially clothing companies, in a month, although the workers were getting paid fortnightly, the government would subsidise two weeks and the employer would pay two weeks. There was a subsidy, although it was not translated to the workers and explained properly. So the Chinese took advantage of this because the workers had no information, I am hesitant to say that there was corruption with the officials. You could see that the Chinese were only paying the part which the government was subsidising and not paying their part. I still remember the workers, even in factories in early age when we had recruited the workers, you would negotiate for an increase but when the workers heard on the radio that government employees were going to get 7 or 10% increase then the workers will also want the same increase. They did not understand that this was meant for the government employees. So they also wanted that. If we speak in rands what they were paid, I am talking about somewhere in, I arrived there around 1990/95 people were getting

as little as R50 per week, but that would have translated into an hour off, it was almost less than 3. In order for them to increase that amount they would have to do high volumes of overtime. They had to do that. The employer introduced piece work where you would work, if you're doing the pockets, you had to do thousands of pockets in order to get more money, or overtime and all that. People worked very hard and had no benefits. No medical aid benefits and all that, just benefits in terms of, at the end of the year you would say I have worked I've got so much, there was no such thing, they would not be able to spend the money, they get paid this Friday, tomorrow they have to work overtime so that they can increase the amount, people would work up until 8 pm. So it was really terrible conditions to work in. Those were serious challenges, coming from Jo'burg knowing exactly how other workers are being treated, they have rights, when they feel sick they are able to go to doctors and still get their employment, they are dismissed, they can be represented, but these ones nothing. If you are dismissed the gates are locked throughout the day, you can't .., you look at these factories, they were done in a sort of military style, you cannot see the people, they are locked inside the building. You would then have the Chinese like military personnel moving around them, sort of like taking turns in terms of them also having lunch, while the other one is having lunch somebody is patrolling, although it is not done in a sense of patrolling but going around joking with the workers, I knew it was meant to patrol to check if there is any movement of the trade unions or any movement of any people trying to .., group workers and all that because people who would come to sell things, they would not even be allowed, but everyone would stand against the fence and throw things over the fence, the bell rings and everyone goes back. And it was difficult to organise workers in those days because after work people do overtime, after overtime people don't have time, the taxis are

here they are rushing home. It was difficult to organise during that time. However we talked to some around the location, I talked to some people and encouraged them to go and seek employment there. It was easy to get employment because you would have like 40 people outside the gate wanting employment, workers get dismissed immediately and somebody replaces them immediately. Nothing difficult, so it was difficult to organise. So I decided let me get someone to go and look for work there, because it was easy to get employment, that person goes in, he knows his role is to do recruitment. You can recruit people, the whole factory in one day but at the same time you can lose that membership in one day because once the employer knows and threatens the workers they all disappear they don't want to see you and things like that. So mine was to recruit at least one or two and take them through the reasons, the benefits, you can speak of anything around the township, the difficulties, but that was not their immediate problems, you needed to speak to them in terms of their conditions, their grievances and all that.

The first time when you go to the employer and you look at the wages, you look at the wage termination act which was there, which prescribed the wage conditions and benefits for the workers in the former Bantustan areas, there was nothing that we could do except to .., I don't want to say demand, but just to ask the employer to say this is what you have to pay, we cannot ask you to pay what is below the law, the workers deserve more than this. It was surprising because the Chinese would pretend as if they don't understand but as we continued and went to labour departments with them and they would tell us that they don't understand this and that, we would tell them when you drive a car and you get a ticket, you understand when a traffic officer gives you a ticket. And then we said if they don't understand we don't understand also why

are they still in South Africa, they are working there, they've got people who speak the same people that we speak, they are able to speak with them.

Most of the problems that we had .., these people were recruited from where ever they are, to come to South Africa, (1) they were promised cheap labour, they were promised low raise in terms of the infrastructure, they were also promised subsidies, all of a sudden now these things are being challenged. The Chinese had a problem with this. I had many threats from them, my cars had been sprayed, I've been followed, some workers were bought to attack me and all that. I can tell you it was really a struggle that, because I grew up, being so young in the trade union, I knew how to deal with these things, how to manoeuvre and obviously with the support from the national office in Durban. They kept on giving us reports, getting lawyers to attend to this and that, write letters to court and all that. So it was encouraging because everyday is a fight, it's win, everyday it's a fight it's a victory, that kept on encouraging me and so on. So those were the conditions around these factories. If you looked at the strategy of the companies, especially the Chinese companies, they preferred to employ females, 95 if not 97% of the workforce you would find that are female. Although men would be looking for work but they preferred female employees

Facilitator: because they were easy to exploit?

Respondent: Yes they were easy to exploit and also in terms of the strength they wouldn't physically challenge the employer. So they preferred them.

Facilitator: so there were those successes in your efforts, and any downside in this effort, trying to organise here?

Respondent: the success, I would say during my time the success were there, firstly you would recall that the New Labour Relations Act had to replace the old one, which was more passive, it was not necessarily helping us because we had many visits to the labour department. I think at that time it was the board, those people, the conciliation, that thing was not working. Soon after the New Labour Relations Act was introduced and obviously with our struggle, where we wanted to introduce the bargaining sector around this place, there were more of other progressive employers or managers whom we were able to use. I would recall one company, the owner was Mr Spies, and he had factories in Kroonstad, Kimberley and Jo'burg and particularly the factories in Kimberly and Jo'burg, they were falling under the Bargaining Council. So he had a global view of what the workers rights are, negotiations, trade unionism, so we had to use him to get through and influence these other companies. The breakthrough that we also had was we managed to push the Chinese to use proper lawyers because they were using sort of right wing lawyers, or white guys to represent them and those people they ..., instead of helping they caused serious damage because they hardened the positions of the Chinese. To them it was always confrontation. So when they managed to bring in proper lawyers, we were able, because once we talked with the lawyers, they understood, the lawyers understood and told them to follow the law and things became easier. Yes we managed to get the workers in terms of their salaries, their salaries increased a lot. At the time when I left in 1985 I had workers earning at least about R30 an hour, you had workers having tea breaks, uniforms, not the ones they had before which were transparent,

protective clothing, maternity leave for female employees, the sick leave, the annual leave benefits. We had almost, we introduced what other workers in other areas are getting through the Termination Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, we managed to introduce. So the salary yes it increased. We had what we used to call Recognition Agreements which was an agreement between the employer and the union that explained the rights of the union, the disciplinary procedures, the grievance procedure for the workers, the dispute procedures between the union and the company. So in a way, a lot of them began to understand that the union is here to stay therefore to make peace they have to recognise the trade union and negotiate. So we basically introduced a system whereby workers will get an increase every six months in their pay packets. They started getting pay slips and people began to open formal accounts because they were able to prove how much they were earning. They benefited out of that.

The challenges that we continued to have was the factories were not necessarily sustainable because when you look at the machinery, the machinery was old, secondly it was clothing, you would have this clothing products from China, Singapore, Malaysia etc, coming to South Africa and that's when the manufacturing factories lost the market. That was a problem.

Any violence, not really but we had a lot of strikes. You would have ..., because workers they did not know what is meant about illegal strike and legal strike. It was one thing that you could explain as a struggle and a training process. What workers did is, if one worker can be dismissed right on the spot, the rest of the workers would want to go on strike. This made it difficult for us because, as I said on the other hand we were relying

much on the professional lawyers to advise the Chinese that the law is the law we can't bend the rules against the law. Also it was our time to inform the workers that what they are doing is illegal. If you want to go on strike this is the procedure you have to do this and that. But we managed also to introduce what we call a cool off period, a cool off period would be something like at least two days, whereby if the workers go on strike, the company would not necessarily dismiss them. They will have to contact us, we will come and talk to the workers, go back to the company, talk to them and then ask the workers to go back to work and then we will deal with the problem. In most cases we managed to convince the workers that you have to understand, if a worker is dismissed its fine, let the worker come to us, give the union the union a chance, the organisers and yourselves together our strength represent the union. We will come to you and do things properly and strike in a proper way, let us show the Chinese that the union can fight this and we will win it, they cannot just dismiss people for no good reason. So the workers gradually began to understand when the union started to win some of the cases and realised the importance of procedures. So at the time when the New Labour Relations Act with the CCMA introduction came in, things became easier because, we had government offices that were in a position to enforce some of the laws. So it was much easier now and also the workers understood, new workers, school leavers were able to understand the procedures. So it was pretty tough in most cases.

Facilitator: but then the foundation, that you guys laid is it solid today or did it crumble when you left?

Respondent: I wouldn't want to speak for myself, but I mean even two days ago I went to the shop, Mc ??< Wheel Bearing Repair. There is, I'm

one person that is recognised by a lot of people here in Botshabelo because of my trade unionism, I'm talking about people who at the time when I arrived here, now you have the new generation, but there are a lot of people that I do not even know, but they recognise me and they will tell me that when I left the place it was better than now. I've not been to the factories for a long time. So I cannot really confirm whether that is true or not but what I know for a fact is that the number of clothing factories, because that was the sector I was involved in. The number of factories have been reduced very much, there are far less factories now. I know between, let's say around 1993/94, I had about 15 000, at the time when I arrived it was about 18 000 workforce in the clothing industry only, with the total workforce, with all other factories it was about 24/26 000, with other industries, but the clothing was very huge because one factory would have at least a minimum of 400 employees, the factories were big. And I used to have a meeting with just one factory about 2000 workers and you would have this factory going on strike, and workers they would go out and the police would be called and workers would remain there, immediately then the next door factory, they also go on strike, in support of these workers. So you would end up having a huge meeting on the street. The conditions today, although there are less strikes, but I'm not sure exactly what is happening inside the factories in terms of their working conditions.

Facilitator: and then the workers, did they join the union in mass, or was it difficult to convince them to be part of it?

Respondent: As I said earlier, it was easy to organise the workers now, but tomorrow they are gone, because as I'm saying that it was easy again for the workers to get employment from this factory to that factory, so you

can recruit workers from here, after a week, 10/20 of them have left employment. And you find them in another factory. So they would also join there. It was easy, but as the union became formal into the factories, the workers began to understand because we also said to them it does not help you when you're hear that in that factory things are becoming easier that you will all want to move to that factory, we can do the same thing also in your factory, (1) if you join us, if you work with us and then you will learn how to do things. We introduced the shop stewards in factories, those are the workers representatives and that helped us a lot because through that we were able to know in time what are the problems in the factories, we taught them how to represent the workers, how to bring their grievances forward, how to relay messages to us so that we would go there, mind you at that time there were no cellphones. You couldn't communicate with a person in another way except meeting with them personally, there were no cellphones, you just have to go there and talk to the person, write a piece of a letter send it there, communication was totally difficult. Workers were not allowed to receive telephone calls from the company telephones, that was non existent, whether you have a sick person at home, or your mother is sick or there's a serious message from home, you were not allowed, your brother, your sister, your husband, or your wife, they will have to come to the factory, stand at the fence and submit a message or request, that was it. Nothing would give you an opportunity to receive a telephone call except if you had a good relationship with a black clerk, she might just take the message and then when she goes to the toilet maybe she can secretly pass the message on to you. So it was really a difficult situation, but we had ways of dealing with that and with the workers who would be willing to assist us. So we taught them how to manoeuvre all these things.

Facilitator: And would you say in general you understand the world work in Johannesburg and then Free State, would you say the problems of the workers here are different from the workers in Johannesburg, comparatively speaking?

Respondent: The problems of this area when I arrived or even today, you can describe as introduction of a new technology. We could well say these workers here are like ten years behind in terms of work benefits compared to Jo'burg. So what we had in Jo'burg was more favourable than here, I mean even today, if you go to these factories, although not a lot of them they are still working, you will still find that the gates are locked, you will find that workers are still working with no protective clothing, I don't want to say much it has to do with education background and so on, but its more to do with the workers were not exposed and given the opportunity to know their rights and that this is how to use them. They believe that I am employed, I must just submit and am at the mercy of the employer. If he does not want me fine, this is his factory, that is how they understood things up until the introduction of a formal trade union and then we taught them their rights. So once they understood things changed, the conditions in Jo'burg you couldn't want to leave Jo'burg and come and work here.

Facilitator: issues around racism and so on was this a problem at the workplace here or not really?

Respondent: There were not, except if I can put it that way, that you would have .., they were not necessarily issues of racism as such because most of the factories, you would have the workers who are black people, let me put it this way, the structure of management was such that you

have a black supervisor, your immediate supervisor, and above him/her a Chinese supervisor or Indian supervisor, and then you have the Chinese who is the line manager and so on. So it turned somewhere, somehow not a lot where you would find a line manager being a black person, it was always in factories where you would have the Chinese, you will find that a Chinese is trusted more than the black person. The black person was just an immediate supervisor, some sort of a messenger and in Indian factories it was the same. In other factories it was fine, like we had about one to three white factories, it was fine, you would have a mixture of supervision but the general manager would be either an Indian or a white person. So the question of racism was not so much prevalent in such that it was open because most of the workers here was just black women. I would not say we identified a lot of racism during that time.

Facilitator: and your movement to Johannesburg to here, you ended up staying here for quite a long time, how did that change your life?

Respondent: It changed my life completely because as I said that I thought when I come down here I will come for a period of like six months and probably December I will be going back home. I end up staying here and honestly it changed my life, it changed the direction of my career because there was nothing .., personally there was nothing here that I can do except to fight the struggle about workers rights, there were no other opportunities. Even if I wanted to do some studies, I would not have had time because every day, every time it was about the workers, about meeting the workers, I'm at home then there is a meeting with the workers, they are given like .., or they got paid they work overtime on Saturday, Sunday they are given a free day then they organise a

meeting, I must go and address them. So I had no time and really moving down here and ultimately staying here changed my whole lifeplan.

Facilitator: completely. Any regrets?

Respondent: the only regret that I have is that I honestly did not have the opportunity to read, to further my educational capabilities. That is the thing I regret I did not have time for, and obviously money to do that. I think I had an opportunity to understand the labour law, and generally understand the law. So I could have done better as a lawyer as a result of that but even after 1995 when I finished I couldn't have money to say let me go to school and study for this and that. There are no opportunities, is this factories, other than that everything is in Bloemfontein and its about 50 kms to Bloemfontein. So you've got to be well resourced to be able to travel to Bloemfontein from time to time.

Facilitator: Also, the struggles of the workers, and the township struggles, was there a connection between the two?

Respondent: yes there was, in fact the struggle in the township, as I'm saying it was more political, that was something which people were more conscious of than the struggle in the factories and people who would take their struggle from the township, you know the method of engagement from the township and take it to the factories, and that was a challenge when I arrived here because I had to change and turn around that method, that this is not a political thing this is a trade unionism, we have this objective to achieve, we have to do things like this. Yes people in the township remember they were fighting the Bantustan government, they were fighting against the XwaXwa administration, they

wanted to take Botshabelo into XwaXwa so, ja it was completely different but it was more of a political method.

Facilitator: Post 1994 would you say that workers conditions changed in general or became better or were there still more things that needed to be dealt with?

Respondent: As I'm saying, basically we laid the foundation, as I'm saying there are less strikes, we laid the foundation in terms of (1) employers to accept that trade unionism is here to stay in South Africa, the workers have got the rights, (2) we laid the workers wages have got to be gradually increased on periodic times, and (3) we laid a foundation obviously that employers cannot just remain employers they must belong to bargaining councils so that we are able to negotiate. Yes I would say that the conditions have changed although as I said I've not been to the factories for quite a long time but I don't think it will be easy for any new employers to come and change what has been achieved. The trade union, SACTU is still existing, obviously with new personnel or new organisers. So I think the conditions that we achieved throughout the period should be maintained and they cannot just be changed.

Facilitator: why did you leave the world of unions in 1995?

Respondent: Yes it was in 1995 when I left and since then I've not worked in the trade union

Facilitator: were there other opportunities for you when you left or you were getting tired of it?

Respondent: I did not just leave, I was firstly, let me put it this way, I was dismissed because of the struggles within the union itself. That was internal problems, the reasons I did not agree with. In fact even when I left the union I had a farewell by the workers, a lot of them actually, they even came to house here with presents for a period of six months, they wanted to finance, that I should establish my own union because it became a celebration of the Chinese and other employers that yes they have engineered that I should leave and they have succeeded, and now they were going to do all this and the workers were not happy, but I ..,and because also it hurt me, but I said to them when I came down to Botshabelo, that was simply because of the instruction from COSATU and the resolution obviously of COSATU that we must strive for one union one industry, so it will be a betrayal, a wrong thing for me to begin to establish a clothing union when I understood the resolution, the strength of the workers when one says "One Union One Industry" I cannot form another union. So I am not the union, they the workers they are a union when they are united, so they must continue to remain in SACTU and make SACTU strong irrespective whether I'm present or not, I might, God Forbid, I might die, it's the same thing, I'm leaving the union, just continue, maintain what we have achieved. It was not easy for them to accept it because we were beginning to achieve and learning new things, and here you had a new person who had to start afresh, those were the things.

Facilitator: Was it worth it to be part of this world of unions when you look back?

Respondent: that's a big yes, as I'm saying that I lost an opportunity to go through university or college, but anything and that's what I've been saying to my peers, whether they went to universities or not, that anything

that I know today, the fact that I'm able to speak English, I'm able to write English, I'm able to do anything, there's nothing that I'm afraid to do, anything that I have learnt is because of my involvement in the trade union. I thank the fact that I came into the trade union at the time when it was not easy and I've worked with the people as I mentioned, those Jay Naidoo, Frank Meintjies, Sydney Mufamadi, those people, they taught me, I learnt, Cyril Ramaphosa, I learnt from them. I learnt a lot, all these methods of engagements, negotiations, how to read laws, how to apply and interpret laws, being an administrator, anything that I do. Today I don't have formal employment but I live on .., anything that I do today I did not go to school for today, I know how to do plumbing, no one taught me but I taught myself, I know project management from start to finish, nursery is one of them, it belongs to me with the other people. I know how renovations are done, from painting, plastering anything that has to do with building, not giving people to do it, I do it myself, I know which tools to use when doing that, I know how to fix computers, if you give a computer here, from hardware to software, I know and that's what makes me to survive. I do almost anything .., anything that I do I did not go to school but I keep on saying thanks to the COSATU, thanks to the ANC because those are the organisations that kept me, polished me, taught me the hard way, taught me how to learn, how to manoeuvre, taught me how to survive, that is why I'm saying that if I had an opportunity to go to school there is nothing I would have wanted to learn except being a better lawyer, that was my greatest wish. Just be a good lawyer. I was saying to another guy yesterday, in fact another comrade showed me a book by Jay Naidoo, Fighting for Justice, so I was telling him that the greatest thing about the trade unionist of the past, before 1994 is that we had less education but the greatest education ever that we had was our interactions with the lawyers. We got to know and understood the law

better than the lawyers from the lawyers because we were able to advance good human facts and reasons, that in itself pushed for the changes of the law because the laws were based on apartheid, but the techniques of negotiations, we really got it from the lawyers, the fact that we were able to interact with them and obviously the workers taught us the understanding of human nature, to understand pain, to feel pain, that is what we got from the workers because the conditions that they were working under, one could feel the pain, it was not easy, they were inhumane, a father or a mother coming to you just literally crying because she does not want anything anymore to do with that factory except if the employer can give her/him the last salary, whatever she has worked for, she wanted it and wanted to leave but the employer would not budge, and we had to fight that. We had to feel that pain for that person and all that. You couldn't just say .., the company is gone, the company is being liquidated, this and that, you cannot do anything but you had to find ways to give that worker, for that worker to get something out of that, that was their pride in that, at least if we can have, even if it's a R5 that we worked for we want it. So you would feel their pain and .., but with the help of the lawyers and those in the opposition as you interact with them, we learnt.

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

Respondent: ja, I think the interview is very important, in fact it reminds me, it refreshes me of where I come from and had I knew earlier I could have even prepared some old materials, photos, I used to have those photos, I used to take photographs from time to time because I believed

that at some stage one needs to portray all those things, so if I knew timeously I would have organised some for you.

Facilitator: Is it possible to get duplicates of those photos and we can pay even if it is not now, but we can pay for those photos and you can keep the originals?

Respondent: I will try to get those photos for you.

Facilitator: Are there other people that you think I should see on this subject that are easily accessible and so on, MEC's and so on?

END

Collection Number: A3402

Collection Name: Labour Struggles Project, Interviews, 2009-2012

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

Location: Johannesburg

©2016

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of a collection, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.