

## **Kalushi Kalushi**

Facilitator: This is an interview with Kalushi Kalushi we are in Soweto, the date is 22 June 2010, the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thanks for your time daddy. Just to unpack, could you just characterise for me where you were born and the kind of family you come from, were you poor or rich and how eventually ended up in Johannesburg and eventually ended up in the world of unions?

Respondent: I was born in a village called Doornkop in Middleburg, but officially I was born in Johannesburg because of the problems had with influx control. I schooled at Morris Isaacson high school, I finished Matric then I worked at Morris Isaacson for 3 years as an unpaid and unqualified teacher and then after three years I joined Wits University and worked in the library, I started off as a library shelfer. Later on I became a library assistant and when I saw some of the conditions under which people in certain departments like maintenance worked, I decided to join the unions because I felt I could make a contribution in making the conditions better. So I joined the union and became shop steward. I became very active as a shop steward, we had older guys who were occupying senior positions but I grew up within the union and I became a very active and very powerful and shop steward within the union at Wits University, eventually I ended up as vice-president of what was then later called MESHAW, we started off with a union called BUWA, the Black University Workers Association. We formed BUWA as blacks because at the time there were three white staff associations which did not allow blacks to join and then the older guys at the time decided we form our own. People like Jacob Nzimande, Abel Molefe, Abisai Thwane and a number of other guys decided we must form our own. That is how BUWA was formed with

the blessing of course, at the time of the then vice-Chancellor, GR Bozoli. He actually came to our inaugural meeting in the great hall with his team of administration people, they came and blessed the formation of Black University Workers Association. And as I say I became very active in BUWA.

We then realised we needed education in terms of union education and we became part of what was then Urban Training Projects. It became a school for union people because we did not have unions in the country, so very few people knew anything about unions. So we needed Urban Training Projects to train us. We attended seminars, usually in centres owned by the Catholic Church. We used to go for weekend seminars, that's how we got to learn more about unions.

We later then decided to join the federation, we underestimated the possibility of some union coming within the campus to organise, we underestimated that, we got messed up because General and Allied Workers Union came on campus and organised and they messed us up. They took a huge slice of our membership, especially that they were affiliated to COSATU and people felt we should affiliate to COSATU but then at the time we couldn't because GAWU was already affiliated to COSATU, was organising within the campus and we then had to go to NACTU. We became affiliated to NACTU. And then we became very active in NACTU, we had a lot of contact with COSATU, we had a lot of meetings with COSATU during the post-1976 period when we were organising stay aways, we were part and parcel of the union movement that was organising stay aways which were spearheaded by COSATU and NACTU.

We first held a congress in order to debate the issue of affiliation and it was obvious we couldn't go to COSATU, so the people agreed that we should go to NACTU. NACTU was then based in what was then called Lacton House, on the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor I think on Wanderers street. NACTU then felt that we should have fewer unions which in effect meant that some unions had to amalgamate, come together. It took us quite a long time to deliberate over the issues, to look at all the problems that we will encounter in terms of positions, in terms of monies, in terms of a host of other things that would have to be taken care of. We realised that a lot of people would fear the possibility of losing positions. If you come together, you amalgamate it means you must have one General Secretary, one President, one Treasurer and if you have four unions in the civil service, the four unions had to come together, some people were obviously going to lose their positions. It became a thorny issue and it took a long time for us to try and see how we are going to get around this. Eventually it was felt, well, we will have to have democratic elections, if you lose you lose, if you win you win, if you get in you get in. Unfortunately one General Secretary of one union realised he didn't stand a chance so he pulled out of the major talks. The same applied to other unions within NACTU, other unions felt that certain people are going to lose positions so what happened was, some of the majors became majors in name only but they continued to operate separately as this union and that union. But officially they would assume a name that would encompass all the four unions but operating separately as different unions simply because people didn't want to lose their positions. I'm not sure what else to tell you, maybe if you ask questions I will be able to respond.

Facilitator: When did you exactly join Wits and what was your impression of the place when you landed there?

Respondent: I joined Wits on 1 February 1969 starting off at the medical library in Hillbrow. At the time Wits University had this image that it is a liberal institution, the university was very good in marketing itself as a liberal institution. I didn't go to Wits because of that, I went to Wits because there was an opening there, a colleague of mine at Morris Isaacson told me there's an opening and I went there and I went through the formalities, test, I had to compete with some people and eventually I got the job. And I was happy to be employed by Wits because there was this issue of Wits being liberal. Quite honestly I didn't see anything liberal about Wits University, it was just another white institution in South Africa and I didn't see anything liberal about them.

When I got to Wits, there were black tea rooms and white tea rooms, black toilets white toilets, black cups, white cups, black working grades, white working grades and therefore black salaries and white salaries. Everything was separate. It was in tune with separate development of this country, so there was nothing liberal about Wits. I wouldn't say it was conservative but definitely not liberal unless of course we have to redefine the word liberal for Wits to fit in, but otherwise there was nothing liberal about the university.

Just to give you an example, one time I was invited to pick up a piece of cake because one white lady was celebrating her birthday, I went there, picked up a piece as I was walking out another white lady stopped me and started chatting, eventually we found ourselves sitting down and chatting. One of the big bosses found me in the white tea room sitting on a white chair and eventually I was called to his office and given a telling off of my life for being found sitting on a white chair in a white tea room

and holding a white saucer and a white piece of cake. I was given a telling of my life. The other incident was when I refused to accept a tip from an elderly white lady and she reported that and I was given a telling off. I was a young man of 23/24, I didn't have the guts to answer back at the time because I was looking after the family, I had my siblings at boarding school, losing a job would mean they must come back. I didn't want to risk being fired. Wits was part of white South Africa, there was nothing wonderful about Wits.

Facilitator: The general feeling, I'm moving towards the establishment of the black union. The general amongst black workers and so on at Wits at that time and beyond?

Respondent: The general feeling .., it was felt that, much as Wits is supposed to be liberal, we needed to form our own black organisation so that we can pursue black issues which are separate from white issues. They had different problems from us and it was felt if we formed our own we would focus on black issues, those issues that affected blacks, transport, residential area, black grades, black salaries and black conditions of service. People felt there is a need for us to have our own organisation, that is why we had this BUWA. That was the general feeling and that .., there was even an attempt, after we formed BUWA, there was an attempt by management to separate blacks, the salaried staff and the wage staff. They realised that once we have the cleaners and the other people behind us we were going to be very powerful. So they tried to split .., unfortunately a lot of guys saw through that and the few people who had been coerced by the whites to initiate the separation between the salaried and the wage staff, it was a big thing at the time, the wage and salaried staff. We got paid on the 25<sup>th</sup>, the wage staff got paid at the

end of the month on the 31<sup>st</sup>. So management was feeling they should split us, we should then join the white staff association which had by that time had opened up membership to everybody.

Facilitator: when did they do that?

Respondent: I don't remember the dates but they opened up membership and we saw that as an attempt to split the black force. Very few people joined, some of those who joined actually held dual membership because they didn't want to be seen as sell outs, I think about 4/5% of the black staff joined.

Facilitator: How much influence was ..(unclear) the ideas of BC and so on, you came in 1969 that was the formation of SASO, and of course the era of the 1970s, was the era of the BCM?

Respondent: Yes it was the BCM, I wouldn't say really that BCM or BC had anything to do with BUWA, I would say it was a coincidence that we formed our own black thing at the time Black Consciousness was fashionable, I think it was a coincidence, I think it was a co-incidence, I don't think there was any influence from the BCM. Although of course at the time there was MUSAS on campus, there were no black students at the time on campus. The law did not allow black students.

When we went to NACTU we eventually ended up in the PAC. Some people were originally PAC but people like me, simply because of the environment I found in NACTU, I was not originally PAC person nor was I ANC. I became PAC because I had a lot of influence from NACTU. I'm from an ANC family but turned PAC, not necessarily anti-ANC but just ..

Facilitator: so in many ways NACTU was PAC oriented and then COSATU ANC oriented?

Respondent: that's correct. The interesting thing is that we in the leadership of BUWA were PAC and I'm sure more than 51% of the membership was ANC. The policies of NACTU that, your politics is your politics, within NACTU we are concerned with worker issues, whether you belong to Inkatha, PAC or ANC that is not an issue. If you belong to NACTU we are concerned with worker issues. But the reality was that most people in NACTU were PAC, that was a reality but we had within NACTU a woman who was the president of a union in NACTU and on the National Executive Committee of the ANC. I forgot her name. She was on the NEC of the ANC but in the central committee of National Council of NACTU and we had a number of people who were Inkatha and made no bones about being Inkatha, we were PAC and we had a few people who were obviously ANC but the majority was PAC, we also had BCM, the AZAPO group.

Facilitator: What was the real argument for BUWA to go to NACTU not COSATU, was it based on blackness?

Respondent: It was based on the fact that, if we went to COSATU we would be compromising a lot of people because people came to join the union not because of politics but because of worker issues. So we felt that if we take the union to COSATU which is part of the alliance, then we are compromising people's beliefs. If we took them to NACTU they can belong ANC, PAC, BCM or who ever they want. That was the rationale behind our thinking.

Facilitator: but then GAWU began to organise on campus. I think primarily because we had refused to join COSATU and I think COSATU said okay let's go and organise there, they don't want to join. Initially COSATU had said we can't go to Wits except through BUWA so when they came we said no no we are not interested we would be compromising people's beliefs and then they said okay we are coming to organise there and they started organising. We underestimated their potential and they messed us up. The fact that our inauguration had association, we were able to tell people when they organised that "no that's not a union, this is an association", and you know people were gullible and they tried to say a union is an association is an association of workers, they said no, no you are an association, you don't have the power to do abcd. They messed us up, the elderly people who were in leadership at the time were saying they are a passing show, they said they will disappear within 2,3,4,5 months, they messed us up. And that is the present NEHAWU, this is when NEHAWU was formed, the first president of NEHAWU was a security guard at Wits, he was killed by Inkatha in Zoeloeland, Mr Bheki Mkhize.

Facilitator: so the eventuality of GAWU at Wits it became NEHAWU eventually?

Respondent: that's right

Facilitator: but were you able to sustain your own union then?

Respondent: Ja we were able to sustain our own union, it disappeared year before last. A few years ago I found myself unable to work, to do my work because of union work. Every time I start work there's somebody



waiting outside with problems. There was a time when I didn't know whether I was working for the union or working for the university. I told myself this is just not right. The university is paying me, I'm spending more time on union matters than on university work. I decided I've got to pull out, it had gone on for years my department was aware and they didn't like it, the university was aware and they didn't like it, besides that I was no longer coping, I became the union, it was getting too much. I was defending cases like it's ..., I was always at the DC defending cases, always at the CCMA. I realised that if I resigned as an executive committee member, and remained a member people would still use me, they would still come to me, the best thing would be to resign as a member of the union. So I resigned as a member of the union. This is around 2001, not sure about the date. So I resigned as a member of the union and the union continued. It was now MESHAWU because of the merger I talked about. Municipality Education State Health and Allied Workers Union.

Facilitator: so over time it between weaker and weaker?

Respondent: ja it became weaker and weaker

Facilitator: what was the cause exactly?

Respondent: NEHAWU was, unfortunately I'm sorry to say this, but they were spreading lies, they always said things about us, which were not true and we couldn't prove that they were saying things about us. People would say we are afraid to repeat what they said about you. That is how they organised, they lied and they called us names. Unfortunately COSATU is the most powerful and they joined COSATU.

Facilitator: just going back, back then the challenges of establishing a black union in a white university, what were they?

Respondent: there were no challenges, it was easy, I wouldn't say there were any challenges really, in fact it was very easy, the fact that the institution is white, and most of the bosses are white it tends to make the blacks get together, it makes the blacks to see the separation of black and white and be able to hold on to their own little thing and be together as blacks. So it made it easier actually for us, the fact that it's a white institution with a lot of white administrators and white supervisors it made things easy because blacks had a common problem, white supervisors.

Facilitator: You mentioned that there were a lot of problems, unequal salaries, separate toilets and so on. So which strategies did you use as a union to deal with these issues?

Respondent: Well we had a few strikes, we had the first ever strike at Wits, in fact it was declared by me, I declared the first ever strike at Wits University. We had black line managers, Glen Thomas at Bara, we had black management at Bara who wanted to fire some cleaners, I think over 20 cleaners because they said they could not control them. The managers found the cleaners there, the managers were new and the cleaners had been there for years, so they said "they are disrespectful to us because we found them here". So they wanted to get rid of the whole lot and the cleaners came running to us to say these guys are trying to dismiss us and we tried to negotiate and they were rude, in fact they refused to see us. We said this is our first opportunity to declare a strike and without a strike, if you are a union without a strike you have no

credibility, so we said here's our chance for credibility. We tried to negotiate with Toba, he refused to talk to us, we staged a sit in in the Council Chambers, just outside the campus because there was a Council meeting, we said when Council walks out they will find us here and we will tell them that we are having a stay in. One of the senior guys Prof. Scher came to say "guys go into that room the principal will see you after the meeting" after the meeting he walked out. So we called the people and spoke to them and they said strike. So I declared the first strike. We had a strike on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, on Monday it was a stay away declared by COSATU and NACTU so the strike continued Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. For six days we were not working, so the strike was prolonged. It was the first ever strike at Wits university. We still had 1500 people behind us and there was no NEHAWU no GAWU, it was just BUWA and the students decided to join us. They decided to join us, they changed the management of Glen Thomas out of the .., they emptied rubbish bins all over, in the houses, in the bedrooms, it was kayotic, the campus was in kayos. That was our first strike, when we eventually resumed discussions with management we told them those people are not going to be dismissed otherwise we continue with the strike. So instead started manoeuvring to get rid of the management at Glen Thomas. It was Dr Letlape, Prof. .. I forgot the names. Anyway the strike was stopped on the basis that the people will not be dismissed, we were able to lift our heads high after saving 26 jobs I think

Facilitator: but was it ever easy at Wits, as a union to get your way at Wits?

Respondent: ja we had to push a number of issues which management would not back down on and we would go on and on I wouldn't be able

to remember the incidents but we would push our way in. I remember when I defended my last case, we had an agreement at the CCMA that a certain white man, he was a member of MESHAWU, a certain white man would not be dismissed, we had an agreement, it was signed and when we got to campus they said bull sh\*\*, I said we have an agreement they said no we don't care. So I wrote to the Industrial relations officer, and I said to him this is what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna write a letter to the director general of labour, the president of the CCMA and the labour court I'm gonna send them copies. They phoned me, I was at home on leave, they said "you can't do that". I said that's exactly what I'm going to do. I am going to tell the president of the CCMA that you are refusing to implement an agreement and I'm going to send a copy to the director general of labour and I'm going to send a copy to the labour court in Pretoria. I spoke to them at 9 in the morning, at 12 they phoned me to say come let's sign, I said I will come in tomorrow, I said I will come in tomorrow. It was the two vice principals who were refusing to sign. The IR was saying, there's an IR office, right now it's a lady, at the time it was somebody called Ian Crowther, he had been there for years, he was very experienced, he was a gentleman but then he had his bosses, the bosses' decision, he was saying I have no problem, it's from the CCMA, we supposed to implement. The two vice-principals said no, and when I said I'm going to write these letters one of them, he was trying to ..(unclear) he said "you can't do that", I said that is exactly what I'm going to do, in fact you are going to get a copy. They went to Crowther and Crowther told them if Kalushi is going to do it he will do it. I never made false promises because it shakes your credibility, once I say I'm going to do something, I'm going to do it. So they backed off. It was my last case. I had actually resigned from the union but they asked me to finish this case, it had dragged on for six months and they said please see it through. Hence the

white guy came back, when he came back he said actually I don't want to continue working here, I want a retrenchment package, I don't want to work for guys who don't want me, so they gave him a retrenchment package and he left. When I went to apply for my shooting licence I found him there, he taught me how to shoot.

Facilitator: but was your involvement in union structures not creating animosity between personally, yourself and the university management, some grudges?

Respondent: If there's one thing I've learnt from the white people, is that they don't mix issues. This is where they beat us, if we fight on labour issues they don't make it personal, unlike us blacks, we make issues personal. I've learnt that white people are able to separate, if we fight here and we meet at somebody's farewell party, the fight that we had last week has nothing to do with the party. We greet each other and talk about the weather, they don't confuse issues, that is something I learnt about white people.

Facilitator: Was the Wits of 1969 the same as the one in the 1980s and the 1990s?

Respondent: Wits of 1969 was very very conservative, not in race issues, conservative in .., people were sort of formal and the academics were academics, in the 1980s they were wearing dirty tekkies and dirty jeans, but in 1969 academics were visible, you could see that's an academic, even if he is not wearing a tie, there was something formal about them. Even the student body was not the type ..(unclear) they would write things in the toilet, trash the toilet and ..., there was that conservatism

within the student body and academics. The student body was more active in terms of sports, in terms of, we used to have those floats in the City of Johannesburg, Rag Days, and during the first few weeks of the year we would have like the dynamics week, we would have competitions, reading contests, speaking contests, tug of war across the swimming pool, if they pull you in the water hard luck. There was more fun and when the blacks came in initially there was more politics.

Facilitator: in what sense, what do you mean?

Respondent: In the sense that the black student societies would, which was uniting the black students on campus because there were common problems of all the black students, African, Indian, coloured. Therefore they addressed issues which they thought impacted on the black, so there was a lot of politics around that issue and unfortunately some of the issues that they wanted to address stepped on some tails in terms of the Jewish Student Society, so there was always friction between the black students society and the Jewish society. There was always a bit of friction, there was a lot of politics and they even supported union issues, if we had an issue the students would be interested, they would look at whether is this a black or white thing, if it is they would get involved. So there was a lot of politics when the black students came on to campus. Initially they were not there, but when they started coming in in big numbers they formed this. I was disappointed later, just before I resigned, I learned that there's a Pedi Student society, Zulu student society, etc., I think it's still there.

Facilitator: that's so sad

Respondent: I was so disappointed, when I left Wits, the Swazi student society was dominating the SRC and it had stolen a lot of money, there were accusations that they had taken a lot of money and there was some corruption, the Swazi as in Swaziland, not the local Swazi. I was disappointed.

Facilitator: Issues of racism at Wits, how rife was it?

Respondent: The racism at Wits was subtle, it was not open, they don't give you the money because you belong to grade whatever, therefore you get the salary attached to that grade. And they don't employ people in that grade so in a way you are not being discriminated against because you are working for a lower grade, but then even if you were to apply for a higher grade you wouldn't get it. I'm not talking about the Wits of now, the Wits that I found. That was one factor, the grades that were applicable at the time. Black people did not get good grades because they were black and therefore they didn't get the salaries. And then the promotion within a department, although not specified in the advert, that it is looking for a white person, it is obvious that they are looking for a white, and a lot of black people don't even bother to apply because they knew they were looking for a white person. So there was that subtle discrimination in terms of jobs. We had different facilities, tea rooms, toilets, cups etc. and even when we went to departments like maintenance, which is no longer there, black tea rooms looked terrible, they were like pig stys, and the white ones had sofas, the black ones had a few benches, it looked like a pig sty. When you go to the white one you find that it's a proper tea room. Most of the blacks didn't even drink tea in there, they preferred to pour their tea and sit outside.

Facilitator: were these issues taken up by the union or Wits changed on its own?

Respondent: Wits changed with the rest of South Africa, it definitely did not lack behind, as the country was changing it was also adjusting very fast and I think they adjusted successfully to the extent that in the library, there was a time when we were feeling they were discriminating against whites. We had, at one point we had a coloured woman at the top, she was one of the senior, she was employing blacks like it is going out of fashion, she is now the president of the International Library Association (LIASA) Library Information Association of South Africa, it's a professional body of librarians in the country. It is affiliated to the International Federation of Library Associations. This woman that we are talking about is the president of the international body, which was quite a move. She was one of the senior people in the library, she is the one who employed a lot of blacks where we felt that whites were actually being discriminated against. Right now, as it is, in the library and in a lot of departments, when a post appears, senior or not senior we see the competition is open, to a large extent we believe the competition is open to everybody. In the library, when the post comes, it's open to everybody, except the very junior ones are not open to whites. There's that discrimination, there's no white shelver, even library assistants, I don't know if there's a white library assistant, I think they start from senior library assistant. Otherwise I think Wits has moved on from that period.

Facilitator: How involved were women structures and so on?

Respondent: The women in BUWA it was dominated by men, we had one woman, I think she was a token really, I forgot her name, she passed on,



her son is still at Wits. She was a token, she was a cleaner essentially and then she ended up in folding envelopes and putting letters, internal correspondence, but she was really a token. Otherwise it was dominated by men for a very long time.

Facilitator: was there no thinking of we need to change the structures or, was it just natural?

Respondent: no, women didn't like the responsibility, they didn't like ... because if you come in and we say there's a disciplinary case, you've got to take it, you must, that's what they didn't like, that type of responsibility. Well I'm not saying we didn't have women altogether, but there would be one or two but it has been dominated by men, to a large extent, BUWA and MESHAWU.

Facilitator: And funding opportunities, was it internally funded, the union, or did you get external funding as well?

Respondent: No we never had any funding from outside, it was always the subscriptions, the monthly subscriptions, people pay at the end of every month, it was always that. The advantage we had at Wits was that we never had anybody paid out of that money. For a long time we did the job ourselves, there were no fulltime officials. At one time we had a situation where somebody worked half day for the union, half day for the university and he was paid partly by us and partly by the university. But on the whole we funded our own expenditure, we never had any money from another source except from the membership.

Facilitator: Also you mentioned earlier when the boers wanted to arrested you and so on, was it linked to union activities?

Respondent: Ja, it was related to union activities because they raided us when, we had just come back from Holland and one or two people from that group were arrested and also it coincided with the .., there was a time when they were arresting ..(unclear – there's too much noise in the background) people like Klaas?? And the present minister of primary education, Angie Motshega, we had just come back from Holland and I think they thought they would find some literature here, they were sweeping the country, they were arresting a lot of people, it was at that time. I think we were part of the long list that they had to collect, Angie was arrested at that time and Aggrey Klaaste, Fanyana Mazibuko, a lot of political activists were arrested at that time, so I think we were included in that list. I think, the fact that they didn't pursue me is because I was a small fry, I think I was not really important to them.

Facilitator: but did the work impact negatively on the family, union work and so on?

Respondent: No it didn't

Facilitator: In terms of in service training, were there opportunities to train leaderships of unions and so on?

Respondent: Yes of course, UTP, Urban Training Project was funded by the Dutch Government, the Dutch Trade Union Movement in the Netherlands.

Facilitator: When you look back, what would you characterise as the mistakes that were done by the union, when you look back now? Let's start there or oversight of things maybe?

Respondent: The one thing that I can think of is we did not fully conscientise the membership in terms of politics, especially our union. We were too concerned with worker issues and we did not conscientise members in terms of national politics. We missed that opportunity because we were too involved in day to day worker issues. But well we didn't have the resources also, we could have had a few officials doing political education, we didn't have that. I think we lacked in that, it was going to stretch our resources. I think it a large extent we were more reactive, we did not initiate things that would prevent problems, we were reacting to problems almost all the time. Maybe we could have preempted things, we could have said a,b,c should not be done because it will cause d and e. Maybe we were too reactive. But then again it is very difficult to preempt what is likely to happen. And also as MESHAWU I think we took the advent of NEHAWU too easily, we underestimated NEHAWU, we could have joined COSATU, we could have saved our union at the time from splitting, but then there would be the question of compromising the political position of some people in taking them to an alliance they don't necessarily support, but I think if we had joined COSATU we could have; saved the union and have had a very powerful national union. We were not national really we only became national when we merged with the other unions. If we had joined COSATU earlier we could have become a very powerful national union.

Facilitator: and what would you describe as the successes of the union when you look back?

Respondent: We wrote the Industrial Relations of the university, we literally wrote it, the university did not have an industrial relations policy, we wrote it in that we were the first to sign the recognition agreement, we got to know about the recognition agreement which, we were helped by Urban Training Project to draft it. It was quite a tough thing, I think it was about 100 pages or so. We wrote almost all the procedures at Wits. Procedures in terms of disciplinary procedures, we negotiated those with management that they should be in place so that when anything happens we should be able to know which procedures we are going to follow, disciplinary, work performance procedures, several procedures, retrenchment procedures, appeal procedures, a number of procedures are in place at Wits today because we initiated that they be there and we negotiated, we fought for a long time to have them in place because the more the university dragged its feet the better for them. We made sure that eventually these procedures are in place. We also fought for a number of issues which we got, things like, we didn't have pension fund as blacks it was for whites, no medical aid, housing subsidies, we didn't have loan facilities, all those we initiated and it took us 2 years for instance to get housing subsidy, we had to look for documentation at the Atomic Energy Board, Unisa, Municipality in Pretoria to be able to say these are allowed by law. So there are a lot of things that we initiated which people take for granted today. You go to Wits, you come there you have medical aid, you have housing subsidy etc. They didn't just happen, we had to spend, we would leave Atomic Energy Board around 11 pm before this was implemented. They wouldn't give us the document we had to take notes in the middle of the night and drive back. Today a lot of people come and find these things in place. I think the fact that we existed kept management on their toes, they know we exist they know

they can't just come up with something and say hey this is it, they know there are people to talk to and negotiate with. They knew that they had to be careful with whatever they do. The very presence of a union keeps them on their toes.

Facilitator: Was it worth it to be involved in union activities?

Respondent: It was, my negotiation skills I got from the unions, if I was not in the union movement I would not have had an opportunity to go through those issues, counselling skills, labour law, even when I negotiated with the government on my community in Middleburg, it was because of my background as a unionist, I became the chief negotiator when we fought for our land, the boers removed us and we fought to get it back and I was the chief negotiator, and it is because of the background that I had from the union movement and I believe I managed to gain a lot. I gained quite a lot from the union movement.

Facilitator: Is there anything you think is important that we have not talked about?

Respondent: No I can't think of anything

Facilitator: any closing word?

Respondent: I'm happy to have been at Wits, I'm happy to have been involved in the library, I'm happy to have been able to join the union movement, I'm happy that I was able to protect a lot of jobs, I defended a lot of people, I think I lost about 6/7 cases in 22 years. In the process I saved a lot of jobs and I'm very proud of it. I look at people retiring and I

say he could have lost his job if I wasn't there, that includes some whites that I protected and I'm very proud of it. I'm happy Wits allowed me to continue using the library.

Facilitator: Thanks very much for your time Baba.

End

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